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THE

DEATH OF LEGAL HOPE

THE

LIFE OF EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE.

[Price One Shilling and Six Pence.]



THE
DEATH OF LEGAL HOPE,
THE
LIFE OF EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE.

AN
E S S A Y
ON
GALATIANS II. 19.

SHEWING,

That while a Sinner is alive to the Law, as a Covenant, he cannot live to God in the Performance of Duty: And, that the moral Law is immutable in its Nature, and of perpetual Use, as the Rule of a Believer's Conduct.

BY ABRAHAM BOOTH. *K*

But now we are delivered from the Law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in Newness of Spirit, and not in the Oldness of the Letter.

Rom. vii. 6.

L O N D O N :

Sold by E. and C. DILLY, in the Poultry; W. HARRIS, (N^o 70) St. Paul's Church-yard; J. GURNEY, (N^o 54) Holborn; J. ROBINSON, Horslydown New-Stairs, Southwark; and B. TOMKINS, Fenchurch-street.

MDCC LXX.

THE LIFE OF HENRY JAMES

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BY ABRAM B. B. B.

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1. Mr. J. J. Jones, 1234 Main St., New York, N.Y.

RECEIVED

DEDICATION.

TO THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST

ASSEMBLING IN

LITTLE PRESCOT-STREET,
GOODMAN'S FIELDS, LONDON.

BELOVED IN THE LORD,

YOU have already heard, from
the pulpit, the substance of the
following Essay. At your re-
quest it is now made public. As to the
subject, it is highly interesting. As
to the execution of it, you, and my
readers in general, must judge. This,
however, I may venture to affirm,
That to know, experimentally, the ca-
pital truths contained in the following

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pages, is to be truly wise : and to live under their sacred influence, enjoying the consolations arising from them, is to be substantially happy.

I trust you will ever esteem it your indispensable duty and inestimable blessing, to “hold fast the form of sound words,” and to maintain “the truth, as it is in Jesus.” That so, while some professors of evangelical doctrine are verging towards Arminian legality, and others towards Antinomian licentiousness, it may be your happiness to be preserved from those wide and fatal extremes. So preserved, that while you steadily assert the honours of grace, in the salvation of the guilty ; you may not neglect the important interests of holiness. That while you delight in the Gospel, as the word of salvation and the food of your souls ; you may revere the Law, as a transcript of your Maker’s will, and the rule of your obedience to him.

You

DEDICATION. v

You will do well to remember, that the true honour and real excellence of a visible church consist---not in the number or affluence of her members; not in any thing which may dazzle the eye or command the respect of the superficial observer---but, in her cordial adherence to the truths of the gospel and the ordinances of Christ, in their primitive purity; in the exercise of mutual fervent love among her members; and in a holy, heavenly, useful conversation. These constitute the principal glory of a visible church. In proportion as these abound, the Redeemer is honoured and believers are edified. In proportion as these abate, the glory departs and the interests of religion decline.

*That you may have a growing acquaintance with divine truth in all its branches, and an increasing affection one to another, "for the truth's sake;" that the life, and fervour, and amiable
simplicity*

*simplicity of primitive christianity, may
shine conspicuous in your worship and
conduct; that faith may abound in
your hearts, and the fruits of righte-
ousness adorn your whole conversation;
is the sincere desire and earnest prayer,
of*

Your affectionate friend,

and willing servant,

in the gospel of our common Lord,

A. BOOTH.

*Fieldgate, Whitechapel-Road,
July 18, 1770.*

Nº 8.

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INTRO

INTRODUCTION.

G A L. II. 19.

FOR I THROUGH THE LAW AM DEAD
TO THE LAW, THAT I MIGHT LIVE
UNTO GOD.

THE words which contain the important subject of the following *Essay*, being part of that epistle which *Paul* wrote to the *Galatian* churches ; it may not be improper, by way of introduction, to observe ; That in the epistle to those churches, we have an ancient piece of *sacred controversy*. And the truth vindicated in it, is interesting to the last degree.—For the great question here debated, is, in the words of *Job* ; *How shall man be just with God* * ? In the management of which controversy the

* *Job* ix. 2.

A

great

2 INTRODUCTION.

great apostle proceeds, under the conduct of the unerring Spirit, with all the *fire* of godly zeal †; with all the *affection* of the tender parent ‡; with all the *meekness* of heavenly wisdom ||; and (I will not say, with all the *accuracy* of logical disputation, but, what is infinitely superior) with all the *precision* of divine truth.

Paul was an indefatigable labourer in the vineyard of Christ, and a successful preacher of the everlasting gospel. He was abundantly useful in the execution of his apostolic office, in turning multitudes of sinners *from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God.*—Yet, after all his unwearied labours, and all his unparalleled success, he did not arrogate to himself the least share of the honour. His language is; *Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* Nor was he backward to acknowledge, after all the sufferings he had sustained, and all the works he had

† Gal. iii. 1. ‡ Chap. iv. 19. || Jam. iii. 13.

INTRODUCTION. 3

performed, for the sake of his divine Master ; that, as a *saint*, he was *less than the least* ; as a *sinner*, he was the *first* and the *chief* §.—Perfectly sensible that he was utterly unworthy in the sight of his Maker, and that the hope of his soul had no support but sovereign grace, as revealed in Jesus ; being well acquainted with the infinite purity of a righteous God, and the sublime demands of his holy law ; he could accede to no terms, he could acquiesce in no doctrine, which did not provide, as well for the *honour* of divine justice, as the *safety* of the guilty soul : which did not maintain the *rights* of an holy law, and display the *riches* of unbounded grace. Such was the faith he possessed, and such was the doctrine he preached.

These truths were dispensed by him among the *Galatians*, and with a considerable degree of success. Sinners were converted, and churches formed

§ Eph. iii. 8. 1 Tim. i. 15.

4 INTRODUCTION.

in *Galatia*, by the instrumentality of this excellent man.—For a time, they lived in mutual peace, and regarded the doctrine which *Paul* had taught, as of heavenly origin. They rejoiced in hope ; they *ran well* *, and seemed to bid fair for obtaining the prize. Such were their happy circumstances, for some time after they received the Gospel.

But, alas, how soon the face of things was altered † ! How soon, as to many of them, were their views of the grace of God, and their justification before him, darkened !---For satan, that arch-enemy of God and man ; satan, that implacable foe to human happiness, quickly began to sow the seeds of destructive error, and to raise up instruments to propagate a perverted Gospel. He *transformed himself into an angel of light*, and pleaded the necessity of obedience to the law, in order to acceptance with God. Thus were they de-

* Gal. v. 7. † Gal. i. 6.

ceived,

INTRODUCTION. 5

ceived, under a pretence of greater sanctity, and a more than ordinary zeal for the divine commands.---The righteousness of Christ, which *Paul* had described as the *one thing needful* for the justification of sinners, and which they had before regarded as the only hope of their souls ; they now were afraid to trust ; they now thought insufficient. They were now taught by the false apostles, and were persuaded in their own deceived hearts, that they were under a necessity of seeking a *supplementary* aid from their own duties.---A persuasion ; so *flattering* to their own vanity, so *favourable* to human worthiness, and without a professed denial of Christ and his work ; they received with all readiness. For it is much more agreeable to the pride of nature, and a far more respectable and popular way of seeking acceptance with the most High ; to use our own skill, and exert our own endeavours, as co-efficients with divine grace, and the great

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Redeemer; than to rely *entirely* on the righteousness of another, and be beholden, *solely* beholden, to a foreign, undeserved assistance. — They enter, therefore, on a vain pursuit of happiness, in this specious, self-pleasing, but delusive method. They cleave to the law. They rely on their own duties, as co-partners with Jesus, in *performing* the greatest of all works, in *obtaining* the noblest of all blessings, their justification before the Almighty. The awful consequences of which were, they embraced another Gospel; made void the necessity of the death of Christ; and virtually renounced all interest in him ‡. By such a procedure, they became debtors to do the whole law, and were obnoxious to its dreadful curse ||. And having discarded the glorious truth which *Paul* preached, they traduce his character, they despise his person, and treat him as their enemy §.

† Gal. i. 6. and ii. 21. and v. 2. 4.
v. 3. and iii. 10. § Chap. iv. 16.

|| Chap.

Such

INTRODUCTION. 7

Such were the malignant effects of receiving a corrupted gospel. These effects the good apostle beheld with a mixture of indignation and sorrow. Against their destructive and fatal mistakes, he therefore takes up his pen, and makes a resolute stand. The false apostles he considers, as their greatest enemies; and as being, in a peculiar manner, accursed of God *. — He made it appear, by such a determined opposition to their plausible and prevailing tenets, that when the capital truths of the gospel were corrupted, the peace of the christian injured, and the souls of men endangered; he had no fear of the hideous charge and popular clamour, of “bigotry to his own way;” or, “of rashness, and a want of charity for others.” — In this respect, as in his ministerial conduct in general, he is worthy of imitation by all the succeeding servants of Christ in every age. For, though it be their indis-

* Gal. i. 8, 9.

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pensable duty to *hold the truth in love*, and to *follow peace with all men* ; yet, when the great doctrines of divine revelation are perverted or denied, then they are *called* in providence ; then they are *required* by the command of God, and the love which they bear to their Lord, to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*. Nor ought they to regard the persons of men, or fear the consequences which may attend, a zealous and prudent defence of the truth.

Happy had it been for the church of Christ in the following ages, if the errors espoused and propagated by those ancient judaizing teachers, had ceased to exist, from the time that their strenuous patrons left the stage of action. But, alas, the same temper and spirit still continue, and still prevail. True it is, that *names* are changed, and the *terms* of the question, then in debate, are greatly altered. Now none, professing christianity, pretend to maintain

INTRODUCTION. 9

tain the necessity of *circumcision*, in order to acceptance with God. That is now universally esteemed an obsolete rite ; though, by some of old, accounted of great importance under the christian œconomy. Notwithstanding, the same *principle* on which those judaizing christians proceeded in maintaining the necessity of circumcision, is still retained, and operates in various ways.

The grand question then was ; *In what does that righteousness consist, for the sake of which alone, a sinner may be justified before God ?* And the matter in controversy between *Paul* and his opponents, was ; *Whether the obedience of Christ, without any other addition, was that very righteousness ? Or, Whether some doings or endeavours of their own, were not necessary for that important purpose ?* *Paul* maintained the former : the Jewish zealots the latter, — To this single point may the disputations of *Paul* with the deceived *Galatians*, on the article of justification,

10 INTRODUCTION.

tion, be reduced ; as is obvious from the contents of his epistle to them.

As the same dispute still continues in the world, and as the words, which afford matter for the present *Essay*, are happily adapted to cast light on the momentous subject ; it may be no unpleasing, perhaps, no *unprofitable* employ, to consider the capital ideas contained in them, in the following *sections*.—And may the unerring Spirit illuminate the mind, and guide the pen of the writer ! That he may not prove an *ignorant patron* of error, but a *well-informed advocate* for truth.—May the same infallible Guide, smile on this feeble attempt for the good of the reader ! That the consciences of the unawakened, may be alarmed ; the minds of the ignorant, instructed ; the hearts of the disconsolate, comforted ; and faith and holiness promoted in all, into whose hands these pages may come.

S E C T.

SECTION I.

What law it is, to which the apostle was dead.

OUR first enquiry must necessarily be, What *law* it is the apostle designs when he says, *I am dead to the law*? We may obtain satisfaction in this enquiry, by consulting the context. Great reason there is to conclude, that the *law* he here intends, is the same he repeatedly mentions in the *sixteenth* verse of the chapter. And it is evident, that is the *moral* law. For it is that law to which we are naturally inclined to look, for justification and life; though by it we can never obtain those invaluable blessings.

When a sinner is awakened out of carnal security, and his conscience is alarmed with a sense of guilt, he naturally looks to some devout and penitential *exercises* of his heart, or some pious and beneficent *actions* of his life. Some doings or endeavours of his own, engage his attention; and, for a while, yield a feeble support for his hope. “What shall I *do* to be saved,” is his language.—With this, the apostle was perfectly acquainted. He therefore repeatedly affirms; *That by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified* *. This being an article of very great

* Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16.

weight, and the legal bias of our minds being so apt to lead us astray, he does not content himself with barely *asserting* that we cannot be justified by it ; but he also assigns the *reason*. Affirming, that it is impossible for the law to justify any of the children of *Adam*, because *it is become weak through the flesh* †, or the corruption of nature. Human depravity renders a perfect, personal conformity to the Divine law, utterly impracticable ; and without a complete obedience, justification by it, is absolutely impossible.

Again : That it is the moral law he here designs, appears from the *opposition* there is, between the *works* of that law of which he speaks, and the *faith* of Jesus. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ* : but that law and the works of it, to which the faith of Christ is directly opposed, is the *moral* law. —For as to the *ceremonial* law, it contained a principal part of the *gospel* of the ancient church. Christ in his person and offices ; Christ in his grace and work ; was prefigured in it, and signified by it. To him it had an invariable respect, and in him it had its final completion.—Yes, believer, that *very* Jesus whom you love and adore ; that *very* grace in which you trust and rejoice ; were in that law exhibited, as the hope of guilty sinners,

† Rom. viii. 3.

and the joy of enlightened saints. Consequently, the ceremonial law cannot be considered as set in *direct opposition*, by the apostle, to Christ and faith in him.

It follows, therefore, that it is the *moral* law he intends, when he says, *I am dead to the law*. For it may be placed in such a *contrasted* view, with the greatest propriety. This law and the works of it, are directly opposite to *grace* and *faith* in a Redeemer. It makes not the least comfortable discovery to a miserable sinner. It knows nothing of pardoning mercy. It says not a word about atoning blood. Being the *formula* of that covenant which was made with man in a state of innocence, it makes not the least abatement, in point of duty; nor the least provision in a way of mercy, in case of failure. Perfect obedience is its constant demand; an obedience, personal and perpetual. Whatever mercy the sinner wants, whatever blessings God bestows, is provided in another covenant; are dispensed in another way.— This then is the *law*, to which the apostle was dead. And, however strange the doctrine may appear to the self-righteous professor, we may venture to affirm, that no man, after all his resolutions and all his efforts, can ever experience a sense of pardon, or enjoy peace in his conscience; can either live to God in holy obedience here, or have a well-grounded hope of glory hereafter, till he knows what
it

it is to be *dead* to the law. This truth we shall endeavour to prove and illustrate, in the following pages.

S E C T. II.

Unregenerate sinners alive to the law, as a covenant.

THE moral law may be considered, either as a *covenant of works*, or as a *rule of conduct*. In the *latter* respect, it is unchangeable as that relation between God and man, on which it is founded; and therefore never to be disregarded, as we shall endeavour to shew in its proper place.—In the *former* respect, it may be considered, not only as prescribing *duty*; but, as promising a *reward*, on condition of perfect obedience, and as guarded by a *penal sanction*, denouncing eternal death against every offender. To the law, thus considered, the apostle says, “I am *dead*.”

When a person is said to be *dead* to the law, it is supposed and implied, that he was once *alive* to it—that his hopes of justification and life by it, are now *extinct*—and that, as a covenant, it ceases to have any farther *demands* upon him, or to denounce any *threatenings* against him. We shall make the *first* of these particulars the subject of our enquiry, in the present *section*.

When

When the apostle says, "I am *dead* to the law," the expression implies; That he was once *alive* to it. Death is a privation of life. No man therefore can, with propriety, be said to be *dead* to the law, if he has never been *alive* to it.—Before regeneration, all men are alive to the law. Or, in other words, they seek justification by it. Their hopes are *founded* upon it. Their expectations of acceptance with God and life eternal, arise from their obedience to it. Such are the expectations of every unregenerate man. This is the way which nature teaches. This is a method which pride encourages.

Man being originally formed to live under a *covenant of works*, and being endowed with capacities and powers to persevere in holiness, and enjoy happiness by such a constitution; it is no wonder that he should, now fallen and while unregenerate, have no idea of living to God and obtaining salvation by a covenant of a quite different kind.—Our first parents, while innocent, having no need of that merciful provision which is made for the guilty in the covenant of grace, had no revelation of it. Consequently, after the fall, they could have no conception of any such thing, any farther than the great Creator was pleased to reveal it to them.—And as all the human race are the posterity of that apostate pair; and as we descend from them, as formed for a covenant of works, and as
breakers

breakers of it ; so we not only derive a corrupt nature from them, and are obnoxious to divine wrath * ; but also *naturally cleave* to the legal covenant, as that which is suited to the feeble ray of nature's light, and those principles on which we act, so soon as reason dawns. No sooner are we conscious of guilt, and alarmed with apprehensions of impending ruin, than we flee to the law for relief. *Sorrow* for our past transgressions, and *sincere* obedience for the future ; *forsaking* our former evil courses, and *espousing* the cause of religion ; we esteem the most probable means of procuring the pardon of sin, and the salvation of our souls. Especially if we have some respect to the *general* mercy of God, and a partial regard to the *atonement* of Christ ; as supplying the defects attending our own obedience, and inclining the Deity to make proper allowances, and be propitious to us, on account of our many unavoidable infirmities.

Ready we are to imagine, that as the law requires obedience, and promises a reward to the performer of it ; a sincere endeavour to do the best we are able, in our present circumstances (though we can scarcely hope to arrive at perfection) will be condescendingly regarded by a merciful God—regarded, as an undoubted indication of an upright heart, and as a sufficient foundation on which to

* Eph. ii. 3.

proceed,

proceed, in applying to us the merits of Jesus. Thus we make our well-meant endeavours to obey the law, a kind of pedestal, on which the *general* mercy of God, and the *conditional* merit of Christ, may be erected to display themselves with advantage, in rewarding the worthy, and distinguishing those, who have already so well distinguished themselves, as the observers of the law and the friends of piety.—And in case of a relapse into open and scandalous sins, they who are *alive* to the law, suppose the remedy is obvious. They readily conclude, that there must be some *additional*s, in kind, number, or degree, to their penitential and religious exercises. As for instance: Sorrowing more bitterly, praying more fervently, giving alms more liberally, and performing every religious duty with a greater punctuality and warmer zeal. Thus they think to *commute* with divine justice, or to *quit scores* for their offences by their duties.

In consequence of such a procedure, they are either elated with *pharisaical pride*, or overwhelmed with *desponding fears*.—With *pharisaical pride*; when possessed of a high conceit of the excellence of their duties, and the safety of their state. When they imagine themselves to have performed the conditions required, be they greater or less; they cannot but congratulate themselves on their happy attainments in holiness, and the glo-

rious prospects they have in view. Their own free-will, and the strength of their moral powers, are the idol to which they bow, the god whom they adore. *They offer sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag* †.—They look down, upon the common herd of mankind, with a supercilious disdain. Wondering, in themselves, that creatures of an *immortal* make, should act so ignobly and beneath the man. That they should not assert their native dignity, as *rational* beings; and perform their parts no better, as *moral* agents. Supposing that it only requires a *good resolution*, in the immoral and profane, to break off their vilest courses; to attain virtuous habits; to perform the conditions required, in order to eternal happiness; and, finally, to receive the promised reward.

Or, admitting they do acknowledge their obligations to *divine assistance*, in attaining their virtuous habits, in performing their righteous acts, and in making them differ from others, and even from their former selves; yet, while they are looking to these holy qualities and righteous deeds, as being either the *cause* or the *condition*, more or less, of their acceptance with God or interest in Jesus; they are *alive* to the law, and debtors to perform the whole. However amiable in their tempers and conduct, or excellent in

† Hab. i. 16.

their characters among their fellow-creatures; however they may please themselves, or be applauded by others, their state, in the estimate of heaven, is the same with his in the parable, who said; “God *I thank thee*, I am “not as other men.”—The abominable fault and the fatal mistake of this pharisee, did not consist merely, or principally, in *prefer- ring* his state to that of other men in general, or of the publican in particular; for he expressly acknowledged his obligations to *pre- venting and assisting grace*, which enabled him to avoid the sins, and practise the duties he mentions. And, surely, it never can be esteemed such an aggravated crime, for a man of a religious character and becoming conduct, when he reflects upon the vicious practices of many, which render them a nuisance to society, and a pest to the public; to say, “God *I thank thee*, that I am not guilty “of such enormous crimes; that I am not “abandoned to such evil courses, and lost “to all sense of things divine. The seeds “of those abominable iniquities, I acknow- “ledge, are deeply sown in my very consti- “tution; and, that they have not sprung up “to such a malignant height, is owing to thy “*restraining grace*.” Such language may be used by the *humblest* christian, or the *highest* faint, without giving any occasion for blame.

The fault, the awful mistake of the pharisee principally lay, in *trusting* to that dis-

ference, in *pleading* that preference, in the important article of justification before the tremendous Jehovah. Here he was *chargeable*, as an extravagant boaster. Here he was *condemnable*, as a vile offender.—In the momentous affair of acceptance with his offended Maker, he ought to have ranked himself with the *worst* of publicans, and the most *abandoned* villains. He ought to have considered himself, as having *no other* righteousness on which to depend, than what would be *equal* to their wants, and the *salvation* of their souls, were it applied to them. For in that grand concern, the eternal Sovereign has *no regard* to any thing short of an *absolutely perfect* righteousness. Of this the pharisee was destitute, as well as the publican. Whatever *difference* may subsist between man and man, as to their moral character and religious performances, it has not the *least* concern in their justification.—Of this the poor deluded self-justifier, was ignorant. For, though he did not pretend that he was *naturally* any better than others; though he did not pretend that his works were *meritorious*, or done in his *own* strength; yet he supposed that he had, by the assistance of grace, performed the *condition* on which the pardon of his sins, and his acceptance with God, were suspended †.

† See Dr. OWEN on *Just.* Chap. 17.

Such was the state of this pharisee; and such, at the best, are the hopes of all who are *alive* to the law. When they think of appearing before the great Judge of the world, they look to their own holy desires and pious endeavours, to relieve their anxious minds. In this way is their peace of conscience, such as it is, obtained. This is the method in which they seek to make and preserve their peace with that sovereign Being, whose majesty they have affronted, and whose laws they have broken. To the *law* they appeal, and by it they must stand or fall.

On the other hand; when this way of seeking comfort fails to afford relief; when a reflection upon their pious performances and penitential exercises yields no consolation; then a sense of guilt overwhelms them with *desponding fears*.—The covenant of grace, with all its cheering promises; the blood of Immanuel, with all its infinite merit, will be overlooked by them. Or, if not entirely overlooked, will afford them no peace, while *alive* to the law. For as it is the righteousness of the law alone, with which they are acquainted; so it is in that righteousness they desire to be found. It is that on which they principally rely; and without that, they esteem every other thing insufficient.—Persuaded they may be, that as their own obedience is greatly imperfect, so they cannot be saved without *some* assistance from Him who

hung on the cross, or without *some* gracious indulgence from the mercy of God: but, at the same time, neither the *atonement* of Christ, nor the *mercy* of heaven, will support their minds, any farther than they suppose themselves to have performed the condition, or come up to the terms, on which they imagine *that* assistance is granted, and *this* mercy exercised. So that all their hopes and all their comforts, are ultimately resolved into their own duties—into that by which they suppose themselves to differ from the altogether worthless and vile.

Hence it is evident, that the peace of conscience such persons enjoy, is founded in their *ignorance* of the evil of sin, and the wrath it deserves. When therefore at any time, its infinite demerit appears to a greater degree than common, their consciences are pressed with guilt, and racked with terrors. Amazement seizes their minds, and horror chills their blood. Their cry is, *Who shall dwell with devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings ||?* And if some fresh opiate be not administered to conscience, or the Spirit of God divorce them from the law, and shew them a better covenant; their *souls will choose strangling rather than life*.—Such is the case of a sinner, who is alive to the law, when guilt burdens the soul, and conscience sharpens her sting.

|| Isai. xxxiii. 14.

Let

Let the thoughtless sinner, and the self-righteous professor, consider their state, and advert to these alarming things. Whether my reader be the one or the other, his state is dangerous.—Is he one of those *careless mortals*, whose whole time is employed in making provision for the present life, and to fulfil the lusts of the flesh? He is no less under the law, he is no less obnoxious to its curse, though he think not at all about it. But can you rest, O thoughtless sinner! in such a condition? Can you imagine that your Maker and your Judge, will be for ever as forgetful of you, as you are, at present, forgetful of Him and his worship? Can the Omniscient overlook you? or, can He who declares, “I will by *no means* clear the “guilty,” suffer you to sin with impunity? No! while his nature is *holy*, and his word is *true*; while he *bates* sin, and has *power* to punish; it can never be. You may sleep in your sins for a time, but (if grace prevent not) your damnation *will* not, *cannot* slumber §. And dreadful indeed will be your condition, if you continue to sleep till fire and brimstone awaken you. *Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver* *.—The rich man, in the parable, being *in hell*, *lift up his eyes*. Then were his eyes opened. The bewitching

§ 2 Pet. ii. 3. * Ps. l. 22.

pleasures of the world, had lulled his conscience asleep. His elevated station in life, became a continual prompter to his vanity, and enabled him to riot in the luxuries of sense. These engrossed his time, and left him no leisure moments to think about the state of his soul, or the God who made him. The downward road in which he walked, being broad, and easy, and much frequented; and being strewed, as it were, with roses; he forgot to ask himself *where* it would terminate, till he arrived on the infernal shores. Thus he became a *damned* soul and lost his *all*, before he apprehended his danger.—Beware, reader! lest this should be your case. May the children of this world and the sons of carnal pleasure, be effectually warned by this dreadful catastrophe of their unhappy brother; that they come not into the same place of black despair and endless torment!

Or, is my reader a *serious* person, and possessed of an abiding concern for his soul? Permit me to ask, Are you *alive to the law*, and seeking by a sincere obedience to it, to gain acceptance with the high and holy God? If so, hear your doom; see your danger. For thus saith the Lord and the lawgiver: *As many as are of the works of the law, are—* what? pardoned? accepted? blessed? Far from it. On the contrary, they are UNDER A dreadful CURSE †.—“Amazing!” cries

† Gal. iii. 10.

one. "That avowed rebels against God, and
 " the *open breakers* of his law; that those
 " who publish their sins, as *Sodom*, and hide
 " them not, as *Gomorrhah*; that all *such* should
 " be under a curse, appears equitable. But
 " that persons who are *of the works of it*;
 " who sincerely endeavour to perform its
 " commands, and are looking, in this ra-
 " tional and popular way, for acceptance and
 " eternal life, is quite inconceivable and
 " highly unreasonable."—To which it may
 be replied: That all who are *of the works of*
the law, are under it as a covenant. As such,
 it requires *perfect* obedience; and perfect obe-
 dience it *must* have, or there is no justifica-
 tion by it. Now the apostle, in this alarm-
 ing text, takes it for granted, that every man
 has sinned and broken the law. Consequently,
 they who are under it as a covenant, not
 having abstained from every sin forbidden,
 and performed every duty required by it; its
 penal sanction lies against them; it denounces
 a curse upon them: therefore, the awful de-
 claration is the language of strict propriety;
 is the voice of truth itself.—How often shall
 the Most High declare, that *by the deeds of*
the law, by our own obedience, *no flesh shall*
be justified; before he gain your assent or win
 your regard, to the humbling truth? Is the
 condition, on which your justification is sus-
 pended, so *small*, or your ability so *great*,
 that nothing will serve but you must perform
 it

it yourselves?—Remember, poor deluded mortals! that pardon of sin, is a blessing so *immensely* rich; acceptance with the infinite Jehovah, is a favour so *extremely* high; that if all the cattle on a thousand hills were your own, and, together with the first-born of your bodies, were to be devoted to God in a burnt-offering to make an atonement for the sin of your souls—were you to give all your goods away to feed the poor, and your bodies to be burned; all, *all* would be entirely unavailing to procure either the one or the other. For a righteous God cannot accept the performances or the offerings of a sinful creature, as any compensation for the injury done by his crimes.—Besides, it is the province of grace and the work of Christ alone, to obtain the pardon of sin, and render our persons accepted. This is the capital truth of the Bible; the central point, in which all the lines of divine revelation terminate.—Yet if, after all, you will appeal to the law, to the law you must go. But remember, that in so doing, Christ shall profit you nothing †. So that you have no alternative, but to *keep* it perfectly, or *die* eternally.

† Gal. v. 2. 4.

SECT.

S E C T. III.

Believers dead to the law, considered as a covenant.

IN the preceding *section* we have seen, that unregenerate sinners are *alive* to the law, as a covenant. We now proceed to shew, That believers are *dead* to it, under that consideration.—*I am dead to the law; ye are dead to the law*, says the apostle ||. As all such who are *alive* to the law, are seeking justification by it; as their expectations of acceptance with God, may be ultimately resolved into some doings or endeavours of their own; some gracious habits or heavenly qualities, of which they are the subjects: so they, who are *dead* to the law, are entirely divorced from every such expectation. Though they are well acquainted with the beauty of holiness, and far from despising a regular conduct; though they would exert their utmost efforts in a way of duty to God, and earnestly desire to bear a greater conformity to the Redeemer's image; yet they consider these things as standing in another place, and as designed to answer a very different purpose, from that of being causes or conditions, more or less, of their justification. Yea, whatever assistance

|| Gal. ii. 19. Rom. vii. 4.

they

they may have from the Spirit of truth, in performing their duties, or whatever attainments they make in holiness, through a divine influence; they consider those duties and this holiness, as totally distinct from that righteousness on which they *depend*; from that obedience by which they are *justified*.

Once, indeed, they were of another mind, and viewed things in a very different light. Time was, they thought highly of their own, thought meanly of their Saviour's righteousness. But, by the agency of the divine Spirit, and the instrumentality of the divine law, their case is happily altered. They are brought to see their abject poverty, and to acknowledge their utter unworthiness.—

Would we know by what *means* a sinner comes to be dead to the law, as a covenant? The great apostle informs us, when he says; “*I through the law, am dead to the law.*” The moral law, in the hand of the Spirit, is the honoured instrument of producing the happy change. By it the awakened sinner discerns, the *immaculate purity* of the divine nature, and the *consummate rectitude* of the divine will. Its precepts and prohibitions, containing a faultless system of duty, are beheld by him, as entirely correspondent with the perfections of the infinite Jehovah. He beholds the unalienable rights of the great Legislator, in the demands of his law; and a discovery of that perfect correspondence which

which there is, between the requirements of the law and the eternal rights of the Deity, evinces, to his conscience, the holiness and transcendent excellence of the law.—Possessed of such a conviction, the sinner comes to see, not only its unblemished purity, but also its *vast extent*. He is obliged to acknowledge, that it requires truth in the inward parts; that it extends, to all the thoughts and all the desires of the heart. That it demands, not only a course of obedience, unblamable in the eyes of men; but a purity of desire, and a spirituality of affection; a rectitude of design, and a perpetual series of action, without a failure and without a flaw, in the sight of the heart-searching God.—By the law, he comes to see the *nature* and the *evil* of sin. Sin is *a transgression of the law*; a contrariety to the revealed will, and the holy nature of God. Nor does it only manifest what sin is, in itself, but also what it *deserves*. It reveals the divine wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; against every the least departure from absolute perfection. It denounces an awful curse, and unsheaths the sword of eternal vengeance, against every transgressor. Its language is; *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*. It fastens a charge of guilt on the sinner's conscience, and binds him over to eternal torment.—And as it teaches the sinner the holiness

ness of the divine nature, and the evil of sin ; so he is brought to acknowledge the equity of that sentence, denounced against him, and the righteousness of God in the damnation of the guilty. His mouth is stopped : he pleads guilty before his Judge. Sin, he sees, is an infinite evil, and justly deserves everlasting punishment. He is convinced that if the sentence of death, pronounced upon him, were to be executed in all its rigour, he should have no right to complain. His language is ; " The law is worthy of God : my Maker is righteous : damnation is my " due." Beholding the aggravations of his sins, and the imperfections of his duties ; the depravity of his heart, and the spirituality of the law ; he despairs of ever obtaining the favour of God, or peace for his conscience, by any future endeavours. He sees with amazement, and confesses with grief, the pride and the folly of his former expectations of righteousness and life by the law. He lies low at the foot of sovereign mercy. Fully convinced of his absolute need of a Saviour, who can give the law its demands, and rescue his soul from destruction ; who can satisfy the claims of justice, and exercise boundless mercy ; he is content to be saved by the righteousness of another, and to be for ever indebted to free, distinguishing, infinite grace.

Let

Let us hear the great teacher of the Gentiles deliver his own experience, in reference to this very thing. *I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died* §. *I was alive*; elated with a fond conceit of my inherent excellencies and moral endowments, I imagined myself safe, I thought myself happy. But when this delusive persuasion possessed my heart, I was *without the law*. Though for it, I professed the highest regard; though to it, I endeavoured to conform my life; I was entirely ignorant of its spiritual nature, and without the least knowledge of its true design. As the most learned and admired doctors of the age had taught, I supposed that a superficial observance of the duties it enjoins, and an outside forbearance from the things it prohibits, were all it required *. *But when the commandment came*; when I saw its immaculate purity, as an image of the divine holiness, and beheld its extensive demands, as a transcript of the divine will; when I viewed it as demanding perfection, with a sovereign authority, and heard it denouncing vengeance, as with the voice of God, against every the least offence; then *sin revived*. A clear and lively sense of sin, penetrated my very soul. I saw myself chargeable with innumerable transgressions. I felt myself subject

§ Rom. vii. 9.
43, 44.

* Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28. 33, 34.

to many abominable corruptions. My heart, of whose purity I was before ready to boast, I found to be *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*. The best of my actions, in which I was wont to confide, I discovered to be but splendid sins, and despised them *as filthy rags*. In consequence of which *I died*. My self-righteous hopes, which before had reared their heads aloft, were now dashed in the dust. The sentence of death, as the desert of sin, pronounced by the law, I acknowledged to be just. All my pleas, and all my expectations of life by the law, were then struck dead.—Nor was I only brought to renounce my past performances and present attainments, as insufficient and deplorably defective in the account of a holy God, and in the eye of his righteous law; but also to despair of ever doing any thing in future, by any assistance whatever, to win the favour of my Judge, or obtain acceptance before him. So that every self-righteous support, was entirely removed; and every avenue to comfort, by my own obedience, was eternally barred.

Thus it was with *Paul*, after all his sincerity and all his obedience, before conversion; and thus it is with *every* sinner who is brought to the knowledge of the true God, and discerns the purity of the divine law. For no man ever beheld the *grace* of the gospel, who has not been brought to acknowledge the
equity

equity of the law. We shall never consider salvation as *divinely free*, till we cordially confess our condemnation to be *entirely just*. —But, when the purity of the Lawgiver is seen in the flaming holiness of his law; when it denounces its curse against the sinner, and his own conscience, being stung with guilt, confirms the dreadful sentence, and with an awful emphasis replies, “Thou art the man:” then the relief provided by grace and revealed in the gospel, is *beheld* with an ardent desire; is *embraced* with exuberant joy. Thus, by the agency of the eternal Spirit, the law becomes subservient to the gospel. The righteousness and terror of the legal sanction are happily useful, to illustrate the freeness, and proclaim the sovereignty, of saving grace.

The sinner being brought, by divine teaching, to see the insufficiency of his own obedience, and to renounce his former hopes as being no other than a *refuge of lies*; is filled with anxious enquiries, how he may escape the wrath to come. Having tried every expedient which presented itself to his mind, as any way proper to afford relief to his guilty conscience, and having found every expedient fail; he is ready to faint with fear and sink in despondency. He drops every pretension to personal worthiness, and freely acknowledges himself the chief of sinners. So far is he from advancing a claim to heaven, on the footing of duty performed, that he is

C

amazed

amazed he was not long since transmitted to hell for his crimes.—But grace forbids that he should be overwhelmed with despair. That same Spirit, by whose omnipotent agency he was divorced from the law, leads him to Jesus. And now that sovereign mercy, to which he was so loth to bow, appears with a *winning* aspect. Now that boundless grace, which he had so long despised, shines with *peculiar* glory. To that mercy, as revealed in the atonement, he *flees*, like a murderer pursued by the officers of justice; or like the unhappy manslayer of old, before the avenger of blood: and on this grace, as reigning by Jesus Christ, he *rests* his all for eternity. Now the everlasting covenant begins to unveil its infinite stores to his ravished view; and the gospel pours its healing balm into his wounded conscience. Jesus and him crucified, is now his only hope. That he *may win Christ, and be found in him*, is all his salvation and all his desire. Riches and honours, crowns and kingdoms, are *little*, are *nothing* to him, compared with an interest in the Redeemer.—Being *dead to the law*, he renounces himself in every view; and reflects on his former ignorance and pharisaical pride, with the greatest amazement and the deepest self-abhorrence. Finding a sufficiency in the adored Immanuel, not only to supply all his wants, but to make him infinitely rich and eternally happy; he rests
com-

completely satisfied. That perfect obedience the Surety performed, which the gospel reveals, and the Spirit applies, being that in which Jehovah himself takes infinite delight †; is an adequate ground for his strongest confidence, and an inexhaustible source for his sublimest joy. Such is the state, and such are the views, of all who are *dead to the law*.

That every real saint is *dead* to the law; and that his whole hope, as to justification, centres in the mercy of God and the merit of Christ; in the grace of the covenant and the blood of the cross; appear from the scriptures with superior evidence. Out of a multitude of instances, recorded in the Bible, we will select a few. We will ask some of the most excellent saints that ever adorned a religious profession, in any age of the world, or in any nation of men; “On *what* their “ hopes of acceptance with God, were founded?” And we shall find that their uniform answer will be; “Not on any thing *in* us, “ not on any thing done *by* us; but on that “ *glorious Person*, and on his *finished work*, “ who is the desire of all nations, and the “ salvation of all the ends of the earth.”

Job, we know, was a saint of no inferior rank. He was no less *exemplary* for his piety, than *remarkable* for his afflictions and the

† Isa. xlii. 21.

patience with which they were suffered. He was favoured with peculiar manifestations of the divine will; and Jehovah himself declared, there was *none like him in the earth*.—This eminent saint could not be ignorant of the real *worth* of his personal obedience, or of the *place* in which it ought to stand. This obedience he found occasion to plead. But *where?* and on *what* account? Not before the *great Sovereign* of the universe, and in order to *acceptance* with him; but before his *fellow-mortals*, and in vindication of his own *sincerity*.—When his friends, mistaking his case, and not being well acquainted with the methods of providence, charged him with being a hypocrite, and inferred from the variety and severity of his sufferings, that he must needs be a wicked man; he pleaded, in defence of himself, the excellence of his conduct and the utility of his life. He, as the apostle *James* requires, proved the reality of his faith and the sincerity of his profession, by his works. He knew that a different conduct from the carnal and profane, was the only thing that could evidence to the world, the superiority of his state in the sight of God, or free his profession from the charge of hypocrisy. To this, therefore, he appeals. This he strenuously and justly pleads against the charge of his mistaken friends, in his long controversy with them.

But

But when the enquiry is; How shall man be *just with God*, or justified before him? and, what he is to *plead*, on what he is to *rely*, for that purpose? Then he considers the state of the question as entirely altered. The venerable saint well knew, that as he was now before a higher tribunal, and in the presence of a Judge who searches the heart; so the righteousness pleadable here, must be as much superior to what was sufficient in the former case, as the tribunal at which he stood was more awful, the Judge more holy, or the event more important. For who can stand, in any righteousness of his own, before so holy a God, before so righteous a Judge?—Here, he knew, that nothing short of *perfection* would be admitted: by nothing less could he be justified. He therefore entirely renounces his former plea. He drops every pretension to personal holiness. And is so far from advancing a claim on the Deity, that he makes sorrowful confessions of his original pollution and actual transgressions.—*Behold, I am vile!* is his language. *I abhor myself*, as the filthiest of creatures, as the basest of criminals; *and repent in dust and ashes* †.—Here we see—not the Samaritan Woman, not the *Philippian* Jailor, not the *Thief* on the cross—but, the most *eminent saint* of his day, and one of the *holiest* men

† Job xl. 4. and xlii. 6.

that ever lived :—here we see him, wearing the tokens of deep humiliation and sorrow, and in the attitude of a miserable sinner. His language is expressive of one, whose conscience is *smitten* with an alarming sense of guilt ; who *deprecates* deserved vengeance, and *implores* a free pardon—of one who considers himself, perfectly on a level in the sight of God, and as to acceptance before him, with the *publican* in the parable ; and as having no other *refuge* for his guilty soul, nor any other *plea* to make, than that poor publican had. Divine mercy, manifested in a *living Redeemer*, was the only hope of holy *Job* ; and the same mercy, revealed in *the atonement*, was the hope and the plea of the abandoned publican ||.

Such also was the conduct of the Man after God's own heart. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant ; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified* §. Words strongly expressive of the mind of one, who is *dead* to the law. They indicate that *David's* heart was deeply impressed, with an awful sense of *Jehovah's immaculate* purity ; the *imperfections* attending his own obedience ; the *extensive* demands of the holy law ; and the *terror* of that sentence which was his righteous desert, and must unavoidably take place, if tried by that sublime standard of duty, and according

|| Job xix. 25, 26, 27. Luke xviii. 13. § Psal. cxliii. 2.

to the tenour of his own conduct.—And it is very observable, that when the psalmist thus deprecates the awful trial, he considers and styles himself, *a servant of God*. But, though he assumes the honourable character, he is far from pleading his services, or trusting to his own obedience, for justification. Nay, he peremptorily affirms that, before the Lord, *no man, no servant of his, can be justified*.—To these words the apostle refers when he repeatedly declares; *By the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified*. This is a capital truth. And till this truth be cordially embraced; till the propriety and foundation of it be clearly seen; no one can form a proper idea, either of the *character* of Jesus, or the *grace* of the gospel: can either *see* his danger, or *seek* out for relief.

With this leading truth, the sweet Singer of *Israel*, was thoroughly acquainted. Hence it gains admittance into another of his devout odes and inimitable compositions. In which place he also informs us, what was the *rock* of his hopes and the *source* of his joy.—*If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared* *. Important words! most happily calculated to *rebuke* the pride of self-righteous confidence, and *raise* the hopes of desponding sinners.—Here the

* Psal. cxxx. 3, 4.

Lord's anointed, flees for relief to sovereign grace, and draws his comfort from pardoning mercy. Being *dead* to the law; having all his expectations of being justified by it, entirely extinguished; he looks to another covenant, and has recourse to another plea.—Having the awful judgment in view, and considering the issue of such an exact scrutiny; he trembles at the thought of appearing before his immortal Judge, in his *own* obedience. For in such a way of proceeding, *Who shall stand?* who *can* be acquitted? Not one of a thousand; not one of a million; not one of *all* the human race. And were it not for that forgiveness, which is with God, and is dispensed in the blood of the Lamb; not only the hope of *David*, but the hope of *every* sinner, would have been entirely and eternally eclipsed.—But this forgiveness being worthy of God, proceeding from the infinite riches of grace, and equal to the wants of the most enormous transgressor; behold! there is hope for the vilest. **FORGIVENESS!**—charming word! Forgiveness **WITH GOD!**—with Him against whom we have sinned; with Him who has a *right* to pardon, as well as a *power* to punish; solid foundation for your hopes, O trembling sinner! Believing this declaration, building on this basis, *what* should hinder? or *who* has a right to forbid? that our hopes should *rise sublime* to heaven; that they should be *firm*,

as the divine declaration, and *bright* as the sun in his meridian glory.—Yes, believer, this is your right; this is your privilege. For that *strong consolation* the Lord is so willing to bestow, and for which he has made such ample provision; is designed for all those, *who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them* †. For such, who have *already* fled, for such who are *now flying* ‡, to Jesus the appointed refuge; the *immutability* of the divine counsel, the *irrevocableness* of the divine promise, and the *solemnity* of the divine oath, are all engaged to secure their happiness and raise their joy.

Would we be more fully persuaded that the royal prophet was *dead* to the law? let us read the description he gives of the *blessed man*, and consider his words. No man can, with propriety, be called *blessed*, but he who is in a pardoned state and accepted of God; and this the psalmist intimates. For, till his sins be pardoned and his person accepted, he is under a curse and obnoxious to wrath.—How then does that experienced saint and infallible author, describe the blessed man? and to *what* does he ascribe his justification? To a *personal*, or an *imputed* righteousness? Does he attain this blessed and happy state; does he enjoy this great and precious privilege, in consequence of keeping the *law*, or

† Heb. vi. 18.

‡ Καταφυγόντες.

because

because he has performed a *sincere*, though imperfect, obedience? No such thought was conceived in the psalmist's mind; no such thing drops from his pen.—His words are; *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile* ||.—The blessed man is here described, as one who is, in himself, a *polluted* sinner; an *insolvent* debtor; and deeply pressed in his conscience with the *weight* of his guilt §. And his blessedness arises; not from his own duties, or his well-meant endeavours to keep the law; but, from the *pardon*ing love of God, the *purifying* blood of Jesus, and the *sanctifying* operations of the Holy Spirit. His blessedness consists, in being *cleansed* from his loathsome defilement; the *non-imputation* of his enormous debt; the *removal* of his intolerable burden; and the *renewal* of a right spirit within him. The last of which particulars, is no *cause* or condition of the former; but an *evidence* of their being enjoyed.

|| Psal. xxxii. 1, 2.

§ The three terms used in the text, to express the *pardon*ing mercy of God, give us these *three* ideas of sin; to set forth in a more affecting view, its *various* malignity. At the same time to represent, in a more striking light, the *complicated* wretchedness of that man, whose sins are not forgiven; and to shew the *superior excellence* of a free pardon.

The observation which *Paul* makes on this evangelical and comfortable text, is full to our purpose. He informs us, that the design of *David* in these words, is to describe *the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works* *.—Righteousness imputed: righteousness without works. An odd kind of phrases, in the account of many! Uncouth and mysterious to *all*, who are alive to the law, and seeking justification by it. But quite intelligible and highly comforting, to such as are *dead* to the law; to such who believe in Jesus, as the *justifier of the ungodly*; and venerate his charming name, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. To such persons, the phrases are replete with marrow and fatness. Such divine declarations feast their very souls. For they are the words of grace and the language of love.—By them, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, their anxious enquiries, about acceptance with the eternal Sovereign, are satisfied. Being conscious that they have *no* righteousness of their own, and equally certain that without a *perfect* obedience to the divine law, they cannot be justified; they must have sunk in despair, if such a provision had not been made by sovereign grace; if such a righteousness had not been performed by their glorious Substitute, as that which is here designed. But, a righteousness *without*

* Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8.

works; having no dependance upon, being entirely detached from, their own duties of every kind; being complete in itself and intended for their use; *this* is the righteousness they want.—A righteousness *imputed*. Being performed *for* them by Jesus, as their representative; and placed to their account, by a gracious God; this brings it *near* to their souls, makes it warrantable for them to call it their own, and glory in it.

Let us now attend to the dictates, and consider the conduct of *Paul*, in reference to this affair.—That he was *dead to the law*, those important words which contain the subject of this *Essay*, expressly assert. That he had no expectations of life and happiness from his own obedience to it; and that his whole hope was resolved, into the *sovereign* grace of God, and the *perfect* work of Christ; are things extremely evident from all his invaluable writings. A few of those passages, in which these fundamental truths are either expressly asserted, or strongly implied, shall now be considered.

In his controversial epistle to the deceived *Galatians*, he forms a striking contrast between the *works* of the law, and *faith* in Jesus. Thrice he mentions the *works of the law*, and thrice he excludes them from having any the *least concern* in our justification. With equal frequency he mentions the *faith of Christ*, and as often asserts that we are *justified* by

by it †.—These are his words: *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified ‡.*—*We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles. We who are the children of Abraham, and the peculiar people of God; to whom the sacred oracles were committed, who have the ordinances of divine worship, and whose situation in every respect, is greatly superior to that of the ignorant, profligate, idolatrous Gentiles: we who possess so many advantages, in comparison with the benighted heathen; and, were such a thing practicable, have all the encouragement which any persons could have, to expect justification by our own obedience. Knowing that a man, whether Jew or Gentile, is not justified by the works of the law. Being fully persuaded that he is not accepted of God, on account of any works which he has done, by any assistance whatever; but by the faith of Jesus Christ. By relying on him as the end of the law for righteousness, and believing on him as the*

† That is, not by the *principle* or the *exercise* of faith; but by the *object* of it: which is Christ and his righteousness.

‡ Gal. ii. 15, 16.

justifier of the ungodly ||. *Even we*, possessing such a conviction, and acting under such a persuasion; *have believed in Jesus Christ*. Have renounced our own righteousness, as being absolutely insufficient, and betook ourselves to Jesus under the humbling character, of guilty, helpless, miserable sinners. And with this professed design, *that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law*. That our sins might be pardoned, and our persons accepted, in this truly evangelical way: no longer desiring, nor any more attempting, to seek these superlative blessings by the works of the law, whether moral or ceremonial. And good reason we have, to drop every such pursuit. *For* God himself has declared, and it stands on everlasting record, to confound every proud attempt to establish our own obedience; *that by the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified*. So that, whether we regard the divine declaration, recorded by the psalmist §, or whether we advert to the manifold imperfections attending our best performances; we are fully assured, that we never shall, that we never can, be justified by them.—Such is the purport of this apostolic testimony.

In this important text, the zealous apostle states, asserts and defends the truth for which we plead, in the most emphatical and reite-

|| Rom. x. 4. and iv. 5. § Psal. cxliii. 2.

rated manner. This single passage, if considered in connection with the scope and design of the whole epistle, and the state of the *Galatian* churches at the time in which it was written and addressed to them; may be justly considered, as a decisive proof of the point. A decisive proof, that no man ever *was* accepted of God; that no man ever *can* be justified before him; by any holiness, of which he is the subject, or on account of any works, which he has performed: and, consequently, that every real believer is *dead to the law*.

The views of a man who is *alive* to the law, and the hope of one who is *dead* to it, are finely described by the same infallible author, in his consolatory and instructive letter to the church at *Philippi*. These things he illustrates in his own experience and conduct. The support of his hope and the views which he had before conversion, he compares with what he after enjoyed.—While alive to the law and before conversion, the privileges of his *birth*, as a son of the renowned *Abraham*, and his *circumcision* according to the divine command; the *zeal* which he had for the traditions of his fathers, and the *strictness* of his profession, as a pharisee; his *punctual performance* of ceremonial institutions, his *unblamable* conduct in the sight of men, and his *sincere obedience* to the moral law; were the things which he counted his greatest gain,

gain, as constituting the foundation of his hope of eternal life. These were the ground of his self-righteous confidence, and the fewel of his pharisaical pride. And, if trusting in these things had been lawful or safe for any man, no one had greater advantages or a fairer pretence, than *Saul* the pharisee had*.

But, when apprehended by omnipotent grace †, and dead to the law; he builds on another foundation, and speaks a very different language. Then he declares, that all those things which he once accounted his highest gain, he now esteems, not only *mean* in comparison with Christ, but *loss* itself. With an air of great solemnity, and as about to utter a truth of the last importance, he adds; *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith ‡.*—Let us briefly consider the several clauses of this remarkable text. *Yea doubtless*; I affirm it without the least hesitation, and am determined to abide it. That *I count ALL THINGS*; whether they be birth-privileges, or pharisaical zeal; ceremonial rites,

* Philip. iii. 4.

† Ibid. 12.

‡ Ibid. 8, 9.

or moral duties ; these, *all* these, notwithstanding their splendid appearance to an eye tinctured with *Jewish* prejudices, I count *but loss*. Yea, I do not only thus repudiate all my privileges and all my performances before conversion ; but all my apostolic gifts and all my christian graces ; all that I have and all that I do, I esteem of no avail in the grand article of justification. These things, though abundantly useful and highly excellent, when standing in their proper places, and referred to suitable ends ; are little, are nothing, are *loss* itself, compared with *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*. Such is the love I bear to my Saviour, and such the esteem I have for his righteousness, that for his sake *I have* gladly *suffered the loss of all things* which I once so highly prized. And, however strange it may appear to a mind leavened with legal pride, I again declare, that I *count them*, despicable as the *filthy rags*, which are thrown to the dogs ; and *loathsome as dung*, which is cast out of sight. Such is the amount of my own performances, and such my estimate of them, if set in competition with Jesus, and presuming to stand in the place of his righteousness. It is, therefore, now my principal desire and supreme concern, *that I may win Christ*, as quite sufficient to supply all my wants, and render me completely and eternally happy. That so, when the Judge ascends the throne

and wrath makes inquisition for blood; when none but the perfectly righteous shall be able to stand, I may *be found in Him* the Beloved *. And being thus found, my acceptance is certain; my salvation is sure. *Not having*, not depending upon or pleading, *mine own righteousness, which is of the law*; my inherent holiness with which I am endowed, as a christian; and those righteous acts I have been enabled to perform, in compliance with the sacred precepts, and with a view to the glory of God. *But*, being adorned with and depending upon, *that* glorious obedience *which is through the faith of Christ*: which was finished by him, is revealed in the gospel, and received by faith. Even that obedience, which, to denote its absolute perfection and the manner in which the sinner enjoys it to his comfort, is called; **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD BY FAITH.**—Thus *Gamaliel's* pupil, thus the apostle of Christ, delivers his faith and describes the foundation of his hope of future acceptance. And this declaration he made, on purpose to guard the *Philippian* converts, against the subtle attacks of *judaizing* teachers †: who strenuously contended, that something more was necessary to justification, than the righteousness of the divine Redeemer, and a reliance upon it. Which consideration renders the argument from it, the more

* Eph. i. 6.

† Philip. iii. 1, 2.

strongly conclusive in proof of the point in hand.

Let us hear another infallible teacher and faithful follower of the Lamb, when delivering, not his own *private* sentiments, but the faith of the *church*, and in the name of all the apostles.—A controversy being raised about the *necessity* of circumcision in order to salvation, which was carried on by the *Jewish* zealots with no small degree of warmth, and not without much disturbance to the peace of believers; and the apostles and elders being convened at *Jerusalem* to consider the unhappy affair; *Peter*, after mentioning various things, concludes with making a short, but comprehensive, declaration of his own faith, and the faith of the church in general.—Let us attentively hear his words, and diligently consider their import. For he speaks by the Holy Ghost, and delivers the mind of Christ. He speaks on a weighty occasion, and to determine an important controversy.—The controversy, in fact, was; *Whether Jesus alone should have the glory of the sinner's salvation? Or, Whether human endeavours and human worthiness, ought not to share it with him?* Thus the contest lay, between the *grace* of God and the *pride* of man. And thus it *still* continues, however the terms of the question may be varied, or whatever disguises may be put upon it.

The decision given to this controversy in those times, and what will be always valid, is contained in the following words. *But we believe, THAT THROUGH THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WE SHALL BE SAVED* †.—Salvation is that all-comprehensive blessing, which the awakened sinner wants. Let this be granted, and his desires are satisfied: he can have no more. For it includes, a *complete* deliverance from every evil, and the *full* enjoyment of every good.—Now this infinitely glorious blessing, is expressly said to be *by grace*. And grace is *free favour*. In the sacred writings it is directly opposed to all works and worthiness. Nor can it be otherwise. For where works and worthiness come into consideration, there the province of *grace* ceases.—Therefore, when it is affirmed by the oracle of heaven, that we are *saved by grace*, we are led to conclude; That our own duties, however sincere or however diversified, have *no* part in the wonderful work. But that *favour, free, sovereign* favour, is all in all.—The *foundation* of the spiritual temple, and of our eternal happiness was laid, in the riches of grace. The stones are *polished* and the superstructure is *reared*, by the hand of omnipotent grace. And when the last stone in the magnificent edifice shall be laid, it will be with shoutings,

† Acts xv. 11.

GRACE,

GRACE! GRACE unto it!!—It was sovereign grace alone, which distinguished the vessels of mercy, in the eternal decree of *election*. The reason why they were chosen rather than others, is to be resolved; not into any difference there was *originally* between them and those who finally perish, nor into any good works *foreseen*; but into the sovereign will of Him who says, *I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy* §.—The same grace was concerned in the constitution of the *ever-lasting*

|| Zech. iv. 7.

§ Rom. ix. 15. The doctrine of *sovereign, distinguishing grace*, it must be acknowledged, is now too generally exploded as a fiction. It is now discarded, as not fitted to gain the assent of the free-enquirer, in so enlightened and polite an age as the present.—The opposers of it generally plead, its supposed *inconsistency* with the ideas we naturally have, of the perfections of the Supreme Being. But the reason, the *true* reason is, its inconsistency with the *pride* of man, and the opinion of *human worthiness*, which so generally prevail. And here, it must be owned, there is an entire and eternal repugnancy. *That* being cordially received, *these* must fall to the ground, as *Dagon* before the ark. Hence it is that we are naturally so loth to embrace this truth.—Yea, some there are who freely confess, that salvation is by Christ alone, and through his imputed righteousness; who are not easily brought to admit the doctrine of eternal, personal, and unconditional election, into their creed. And, though their *experience* may plead for it, though their other *avowed sentiments* may involve it; yet they dispute against it, as commonly and justly stated by *Calvinists*, and endeavour to load it with horrid consequences. This the author of this *Essay* knows by experience, to his grief and shame. Through the ignorance of his mind, the pride of his heart, and the pre-

lasting covenant of peace, which was made with Christ, as the head of the chosen seed; and in treasuring up all spiritual blessings in him, on their behalf *.—Our *redemption* by his blood, our *regeneration*, *justification*, *adoption*, *sanctification*, *perseverance* and *final felicity*, all spring from the same infinite source; and are all, in the volume of inspiration, ascribed to the same original and glorious cause.

And as Christ is the great *trustee* of the covenant of grace, and the grand *repository* of all the blessings of grace; so infinite grace is manifested in him in such a manner, as to

judices of his education; he, in his younger years, often opposed it with much warmth, though with no small degree of weakness. But, after an impartial enquiry and many prayers, he found reason to alter his judgment. He found it to be the doctrine of the Bible and a dictate of the unerring Spirit. Being thus patronised, he received the once obnoxious sentiment under a full conviction of its being, a divine truth. And now he considers the eternal, discriminating love of God in the choice of his people, as the original source of all those spiritual blessings, they here enjoy; of all that glory, they hereafter expect. To the *distinguishing love* of the Father; to the *redeeming blood* of the Son; to the *almighty agency* and sanctifying operations of the Divine Spirit, he now desires to ascribe the whole *unrivalled* honour, of a complete, eternal salvation. In the firm belief of this glorious and comprehensive truth, he desires to *live*: enjoying the sweet consolations arising from it, he desires to *die*. And, if the Lord thus favour him, he does not fear, but his life will be *useful*, in some degree; his death *peaceful*, and his end *salvation*.

* Eph. i. 3. 1 Tim. i. 9.

reflect a glory on all the perfections of Deity, as well as to secure salvation to all its objects. And as it was an act of unutterable condescension, and an evidence of boundless love, in the Son of God, to undertake the arduous work and become incarnate **that he might accomplish it**; so we are, with the **greatest propriety**, said to be saved by *His grace*. As in the text under consideration: *We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. We believe*; we are fully persuaded and rest in it, as a certain, sacred, and most comfortable truth. *That*, though our state be extremely miserable, and our persons absolutely unworthy; though we have forfeited every blessing, and deserved every curse; yet, *through the grace*, the unmerited favour and boundless benignity of *our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved*. He **being** a person of infinite dignity, has performed a work of infinite value; in virtue of **which**, we shall be completely saved. Saved, **while here**, from the curse of the law and the **dominion** of sin. Saved, hereafter, from the **damnation** of hell, and brought to the full fruition of eternal glory. Such a salvation did grace provide; such a salvation does Christ perform.

In this confession of faith, delivered by *Peter* and recorded by *Luke*, the grace of God and the work of our Lord, are all in all. And as it ascribes our whole salvation to the

undertaking of Jesus, so it secures the whole glory to his adorable name. The avowed belief and the comfortable hope of the primitive christians, being contained in it ; we have a striking instance and an irrefragable proof, that they were *dead* to the law. That their present peace, and expectations of future bliss, did not arise from their own obedience ; but from that revelation of divine grace which is made in the gospel. That sovereign grace, which richly provided every blessing, and freely furnishes every requisite, necessary to eternal happiness.

Having considered this apostolical confession of faith, as it is preserved for our instruction in the most authentic history of the primitive christian church ; let us once more advert to the writings of *Paul*.—We have already heard him declare, that he was *dead to the law*. We have also heard him loudly proclaim, the excellence of that righteousness by which he was justified, and in which he desired to be found ; and seen him carefully describe the foundation, on which the most guilty may safely rest the weight of their immortal concerns. Let us now observe him bitterly lamenting, over his unhappy brethren after the flesh.—These are his affecting words, which are introduced with a solemn appeal to heaven ; *I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart—for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh*. To which he adds ;

My

My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved †.—What was the cause of this inconsoleable grief? Were they scandalous in their lives and atrociously wicked? Had they renounced the worship of God and sunk into practical atheism? Far from it. The persons over whom he laments, had a zeal of God, and earnestly followed after righteousness; were sincere in their profession, and diligent in the pursuit of eternal happiness. Of this Paul was a witness, and this he openly testifies †.—In what, then, did their fatal mistake consist? For the popular maxim and the reason on which it is founded, are;
 “Be sincere. Perform every duty to the
 “utmost of your power and the best of your
 “knowledge, and you shall obtain the favour
 “of God and the fruition of heaven. For
 “it can never be supposed, that where the
 “heart is sincere in the worship of God, and
 “the conduct regular in the sight of men,
 “a person's state can be bad, whatever may
 “be his doctrinal sentiments.”—Such is the voice of general opinion, but not of divine revelation. For if this maxim were founded in truth, there would have been no real occasion for the apostle's heart-felt sorrow, over those of his brethren he here mentions. If, therefore, we would pay a due deference to the judgment of Paul, as an infallible guide;

† Rom. ix. 2, 3. and x. 1.

† Rom. x. 2. and ix. 31.

and credit the account which he gives of his kinsmen and his sorrow for them; we must conclude, that the maxim is *false*, and the reason on which it is founded a *dangerous* mistake. And, consequently, supposing a man to act in perfect conformity to it, his state might yet be extremely awful, and his end eternally miserable.

The *Jews*, over whom the compassionate apostle wept, were *alive to the law*, and seeking justification by it. Though sincere in a religious profession, and punctual in their attendance on divine institutions; they were utterly ignorant of the gospel, and despisers of the great Redeemer. That *sure foundation*, which Jehovah had laid in Zion for the salvation of his people, was rejected by them as insufficient, and became to them *a rock of offence* ||.—They *followed after the law of righteousness* with sincerity and zeal; but its terms were too high and its conditions too hard for them to perform, so that they could not attain justification by it. For they sought that capital blessing, not *by faith* in their promised Messiah, but *as it were by the works of the law* §.—They *had a zeal of God* and a concern for his worship; *but not according to knowledge*, as their conduct plainly shewed. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness*; of the perfect purity of his nature, and the

|| Rom. ix. 33.

§ Rom. ix. 31, 32.

extensive demands of his law; *and going about*, or seeking by every likely expedient, *to establish their own righteousness*, as the condition of life; *have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God*. Such was the unwarrantable opinion they had of their own imperfect duties, and so great was the pride of their hearts, that they would not accept of that complete righteousness, which was appointed of God and provided by him—even that righteousness, which is able to justify in the most desperate cases, and in which their offended Maker rests well-pleased *.—Would we know more particularly, what obedience it is that deserves the glorious character? The apostle informs us. *For*, he adds, *Christ is the end of the law*. All that it required, he performed: all that it threatened, he underwent. And all this was done and suffered, not merely to set us an example, but *for righteousness*; a real, perfect righteousness. As such it is accounted by the law and accepted by the Lawgiver. Nor was it designed for the benefit of him who performed it; but it was designed for sinners and is freely imputed *to every one that believeth*; without any respect of persons, or any regard to worthiness †.

To this matchless obedience, the self-righteous *Jews* would not submit. Being ignorant of their *real* state, and in the warm pur-

* Isa. xlii. 21.

† Rom. x. 3, 4.

suit of acceptance with the infinite Sovereign by their *own* duties; they were unwilling to admit the thought, of being indebted to grace, or beholden to such an assistance.—To look for justification by the righteousness of One, whom their rulers had agreed to *execrate*, and condemned as worthy of death; to expect salvation through believing in One, who, loaded with infamy and racked with torture, *expired on a cross*; this they esteemed highly absurd. A salvation by such *unpromising* means, and granted in such a *singular* way, as left no room for their splendid duties to make a figure and shine conspicuous, as co-partners in the affair; such a salvation they would not accept; they thought themselves warranted, from their hearts to despise.—Nor would they acknowledge that Jesus the crucified, was their *promised Messiah*; though the *time* in which he appeared, the *doctrines* he taught, and the *works* which he did, all attested his divine mission, and afforded the brightest evidence in support of his claim to the character. Thus they rejected his person, doctrine and work.—And as ignorance of the holiness of God, the purity of his law and the evil of sin, laid a foundation for that *proud opinion* they entertained of the excellence of their own duties, and as that issued in their *rejection* of the Lord's Messiah; so the same ignorance and pride cause the generality now, to reject his *imputed righteousness*

as an unnecessary thing; even when they do not proceed to that daring infidelity, which pours open contempt on his person and character. Hence we may safely conclude, that all the *supine negligence* about eternal things, which appears in the world; and all that *disregard* which is shewn to Christ and his work, where the gospel revelation shines; proceed from *ignorance*—ignorance of the *evil* of sin, and the *righteousness* of God in his law.

And now, reader, are you *dead to the law*? Are all your expectations and all your desires of justification by it, extinct?—Remember, it is one thing to acknowledge a truth in *theory*, and another to live under its *practical* influence. Many there are who have learned, in a *doctrinal* way, that believers are *dead* to the law; who yet, in the *dispositions* of their hearts and in their own *experience*, were never divorced from it. Their *legal* apprehensions and *slavish* fears; their *mercenary* views in the performance of duty, and their *self-elating* thoughts, when they imagine they have performed it well; are evidences that they cleave to the law. These, when habitual, are a convincing proof that they are *alive* to it; that they are still, in a partial way, seeking their peace and happiness from their own obedience †.

Again:

† Here it may be proper to observe, That the real believer, even after a long experience in the ways of God,
is

Again: what think you of the Redeemer's righteousness? Have you a superlative esteem for

too ready to look to his own *frames* and *duties* for that peace and comfort, which nothing but the *blood* of Christ and the *testimony* of the Spirit, can possibly give. A *legal bias* of mind is so natural to us, and our views of the Saviour and his glorious righteousness are, at the best, so *contracted*; that we are apt to lose sight of the excellent object, before we are aware.—I persuade myself, that the candid reader and experienced christian will not be offended, if I here introduce a paragraph, extracted from the life of a minister of the gospel in the last century: as it may, in some degree, both illustrate and confirm this observation. The minister to whom I refer, was Mr. *Owen Stockton*; a part of whose experience is contained in the following words.—“ I find that though in my *judgment* and *profession*, I acknowledge Christ to be my righteousness and peace; yet upon examination I observe that my *heart* hath done quite another thing; and that secretly I have gone about to establish my own righteousness, and have derived my comfort and peace from my *own* *actings*. For when I have been disquieted by the acting of my sins, that which hath recovered me to my former peace hath not been, that I could find God speaking peace through the *blood of Christ*; but rather from the *intermission* of temptation, and the *cessation* of those sins.—When I have been troubled at an evil frame of heart, I do not find that the *righteousness of Christ* hath been my consolation; but that which has relieved me, as far as I can find, was, that afterwards I have found myself in a *better temper*. Having been in trouble and perplexity, I have read the Scripture, gone to prayer, and in doing these I have been relieved: yet I do not find, that at such times, I had a real, true, living communion with God in such duties; or that the Spirit of God did, in those duties, reveal to me my interest in Christ, and so quiet my conscience. Hence I come to see what great need I have, and that it is of singular
“ use,

for it, and is it, with you, the *one thing needful*? Do you repose your confidence in that *alone*, for acceptance; and venture your *all* for eternity, on that *single* bottom? Is that your *plea*, at the throne of grace; and is it your ardent desire to be *found in it*, when standing at the great tribunal? There, reader, you must shortly stand, before a Judge whose eyes are *as a flame of fire*, and with whom is *terrible majesty*. Examine, therefore, the state of your soul, and cultivate an acquaintance with Jesus.—The fruits of an increasing acquaintance with Him, are truly desirable and unspeakably precious. For the more you behold of his personal glories and perfect obedience; the less will you be inclined to cleave to the law, or depend on your own defective duties. This is a certain truth, and confirmed by all christian experience. For though you will not be inclined to reject the law, as a *rule of conduct*; or to neglect duty, as an evidence of your cordial *submission* to divine authority, and of *grati-*

“ use, to watch over my soul in all its ways, both in reference to sin, that I *fall* not into it; and when fallen, “ what the *carriage* and actings of my soul are at such a “ time; whether I flee for relief to God in Christ, or to “ my own works.—For as satan keeps some alienated from “ God by the gross pollutions of the world; so others “ from Christ, by their establishing a righteousness of “ their own.—O Lord! break thou this snare for me.”
IN BEART'S *Etern. Law and Ever. Gosp.* part i. pref. p. 15, 16.

tude for benefits received and blessings expected; yet you will have a meaner opinion of all that you do, and a stronger confidence in the work of your Saviour.—Besides; the peace you enjoy will be steadier, and the works which you do will be more acceptable. Your peace will be *steadier*. For the more clearly you see the *dignity* of Him, who made your peace; the greater will the *worth* of that work appear, by which it was made. Consequently, your dependence upon it will be more firm; your rejoicing in it will be more constant.—Your duties will be *more acceptable*. For in proportion as your *views* of the infinite all-sufficiency of your divine Mediator increase, so will your love to him. *Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.* And as the love of God is the *principle* of all acceptable obedience, in proportion as that generous principle is more lively and active, duty will be performed with greater delight and diligence; and it will also be more certainly referred to its proper *end*, the glory of the ever-blessed God.

Yes, believer, in such a procedure you will find your spiritual account, and grace shall have the glory. *Faith* will grow firm as the deep-rooted cedar*, and *hope*

* Col. ii. 7. Eph. iii. 17.

bright as the day. Love will expand the heart, and holiness blossom as the rose. The life will be vocal of the Redeemer's praise, and death, even death itself peaceful in his soft embrace.—“ O blessed Jesus! reveal
“ thy glory to mine eye, and shed abroad
“ thy love in my heart. Cause me to rest
“ completely satisfied in thy undertaking, as
“ the fulfilling end of the law; and enable
“ me to live upon thy inexhaustible fulness.
“ Empty me of every self-dependence, and
“ make me truly humble. Shew me the
“ beauty of holiness, as delineated in thy
“ most perfect pattern; and help me to copy
“ it in my own conduct. Raise my affections
“ to heavenly things, and grant me the
“ abiding earnest of my eternal inheritance.—
“ Then, though in a sinful world and a
“ militant state; though harassed with bodily pain, or pinched with worldly poverty; I shall not only be safe but happy.
“ The slavish fears of damnation shall be
“ far distant, and the beams of celestial joy
“ shall shine into my soul.—Then, ye sons
“ of sensuality and children of pride, ye may
“ take your sordid pleasures and boast of
“ your tinsel honours. I shall neither covet
“ your lawless mirth, nor envy your founding titles. Being dead to the law, and
“ alive to my God; being safe in the hands
“ of my Saviour, and blest with a sense of
“ his love; having death in remembrance,

E

“ and

“ and heaven in view ; I despise your mean
 “ pursuits, and abhor your illicit enjoyments.
 “ While the world are satisfied with the
 “ *feather* of fading honours, and the *froth*
 “ of perishing pleasures ; be it thy concern,
 “ O my soul ! to glorify Him, *who died for*
 “ *thee and rose again.* Then shall *substan-*
 “ *tial* pleasures be thy present enjoyment,
 “ and *unfading* honours thy eternal crown.”

S E C T. IV.

Of the law, as dead to believers.

HAVING shewn that *believers* are dead to
 the law, we shall now consider the *law*
 as dead to them.—Whoever is dead to the
 law, as a covenant ; the law, under that con-
 sideration, is dead to him. As the *relation* is
 mutual, while it subsists at all, so is the
death.—Considered as the offspring of *Adam*,
 we are born under the law, as a covenant :
 we look to it for life, and continue in that
 situation while unregenerate.—But, when the
 Spirit of God enlightens the mind to discern
 our state, and awakens the conscience to ap-
 prehend our danger ; all our expectations of
 life by it being blasted, and having fled to
 Jesus as *the end of the law*, and taken shelter
 under another covenant ; then we are no
 longer under its rigorous commands, nor any
 more liable to its awful curse. It is *dead*,
 and

and our deliverance from it is complete and glorious.

This comfortable truth we are taught, by the pen of inspiration, in the epistle of *Paul* to the *Romans*. Thus we read; *Know ye not brethren (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he (or rather it) * liveth. For the woman which hath an husband, is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he liveth: but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.—Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead.—But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held †.—On this remarkable passage we may observe; That the divine law, by an usual figure of speech, is described as a *person*. It is compared to a *husband*, to whom some are *married*, and to whom others are *dead*. To the law, in its*

* That the apostle here designs the *law*, not the *man*, has been observed by many. And, so understood, it seems much better to agree with the following *illustration*, and with the *scope* of the place in general.

† Rom. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6.

covenant-form, men naturally cleave, as a wife to her husband. To it they look for relief, and on it they depend for salvation. Their *hopes* of happiness and *fears* of misery rise and fall, in exact proportion to that obedience, they *suppose* themselves to perform, in conformity to its commands; or the *consciousness* they have of their disobedience to it.—Such expectations and fears prove, that *they* are alive to it; and that infers, that *it* is alive to them. And while *alive* to them, it has *dominion* over them.—This dominion is absolute. It extends to all the *powers* of the mind, and all the *members* of the body; to all the *imagination*s of the heart, and all their *effects* in the life. And it requires, on the dreadful peril of incurring its severest displeasure and suffering its heaviest curse, that *all* these in every instance and perpetually, should perfectly correspond with its righteous demands.—This the apostle illustrates in the following manner. *For the woman which hath an husband, is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he liveth.* In like manner, all who are alive to the law and married to it, are bound to obey it in all things, so long as it lives. Nothing but death can dissolve the obligation. Either the law, as a husband, must *die* to the sinner; or the sinner, as wedded to the law, must *die* to it, before he can be loosed from its rigorous commands, or be freed from its tremendous threatenings. And that

that this *twofold* death takes place, as to the law and the regenerate man, the unerring writer proceeds to assert.—*But if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.* For as that relation on which the law was founded, is entirely dissolved and extinct, by the husband's death; so the law itself must unavoidably and absolutely cease, together with all its consequences. And as the wife has no farther *expectations* of assistance from him, he being dead; so she has no longer any *fear* of incurring his displeasure.—Being thus set free from her former husband, she is entirely at liberty to *marry another man*, without being chargeable with the crime of adultery.

Now the apostle proceeds to apply the comparison. *Wherefore, my brethren*, just such is your case. The law, as a husband, was once alive, and had dominion over you; but now it is dead. *Ye also* were once alive to the law, but *are now become dead to it.* Having seen its infinite purity, and felt its killing power *, ye were obliged to acknowledge, that ye could not be justified by it. Forced, though reluctant, ye quitted your self-righteous hopes. But, having heard the glorious gospel, and being enabled, by the sacred Spirit, to behold *the body of Christ*; that body which the Son of God assumed,

* 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

when he condescended to be made under the law; and viewing the glory of that obedience which he wrought out, and the greatness of those sufferings which he underwent, in that immaculate body, to satisfy the law and justify sinners; with the utmost readiness ye renounced your own righteousness. Having found Jesus, the pearl of great price, and in him all that ye want, ye freely relinquished your former pleas.—Thus ye became dead to the law, *that ye should be married to another* and a better husband; *even to HIM who* died on the cross to atone for your sins, and *is raised from the dead* to present you complete. Yes, my brethren, that adorable Person, is now become the object of your strongest affection and your chaste regards. To Him ye look for every assistance; on Him ye depend for all your salvation.—This being our happy case, *we are now DELIVERED from the law.* Its dominion over us is entirely ceased. It has no more authority to demand obedience from us, more or less, as the condition of life; or to denounce a curse upon us for disobedience. Nor can it be otherwise with us, as believers, or with the law, as a covenant. For the inspired author adds, as a reason of his former assertion; *That being DEAD wherein we were held.* We were bound, by the law, to sinless obedience. That was the least it required. And, for non-performance, it held us accursed. Thus
we

we were held, by it and under it. But now it is *dead*. The obligation we were under to perfect, personal obedience, as the condition of life, is therefore cancelled. Nor are we any longer obnoxious to its penal sanction. Happy deliverance ! Wonderful grace !

Such is the purport of this important paragraph.—Nor has the law, as a covenant, the least right to complain. For this way of deliverance from its high demands and rigorous sanction, is as *equitable* in itself, as it is *comfortable* to the believer. Its precepts were not given, nor its curse denounced, in vain. For though the chosen of God were utterly unable to perform the one or suffer the other, in their *own* persons ; yet, in their *Head, Representative and Surety*, its precepts were inviolably kept, and on him its curse was fully executed. It was entirely on their behalf, that the Eternal Word became *incarnate*. It was in their name and in their stead, that he *obeyed* the commands of the law, and *suffered* its penalty. And all this being according to the eternal compact, in the counsels of heaven, and to manifest the riches of divine grace in the salvation of the guilty ; it is *imputed* to them, they are *invested* with it. Theirs it was, in the *design* of God, before they had a being, or time began ; which secured them from final condemnation. Theirs it is, in the *happy enjoyment*, when dead to the law ; which frees them from slavish fears,

which produces in them a holy liberty and heavenly joy. Theirs it is, to justify and save; to render complete in the eye of the law, and eternally blessed in the fruition of God.

While sinners are alive to the law, and the law has dominion over them, its requisitions are high and its language is terrible. But, when dead to it, and when they commence believers, it addresses them in a milder tone and with sweeter accents. Viewing them in Jesus, its pacific language is; “ I own myself
 “ entirely fulfilled; I acknowledge myself
 “ completely satisfied. True it is, my nature
 “ is not in the least altered; my require-
 “ ments are not at all abated. My end, as
 “ *commanding*, is still a perfect righteouf-
 “ ness †; my end, as *violated*, is still ex-
 “ treme punishment *. I cannot but require,
 “ perfect love to God, perfect love to man,
 “ and perfect holiness, both in heart and life.
 “ Never abating the least tittle of these my
 “ requirements, I denounce the curse on
 “ every offender, and on the least departure
 “ from absolute perfection.—But here, be-
 “ lievers, is your safety, and this is your
 “ comfort; that my precepts have been fully
 “ obeyed by Jesus, your Saviour. This obe-
 “ dience I consider, as far superior to the
 “ spotless innocence of your first father, while

† Rom. x. 4,

* Gal. iii. 10.

“ in the bowers of paradise, or the sanctity
“ of angels in the glory of heaven. It is
“ possessed of infinite worth, and by it I am
“ highly magnified†.—This is your comfort,
“ believers ; that the curse due to your sins,
“ has been executed on your most holy
“ Surety. And his sufferings were more
“ than tantamount to your eternal misery.
“ And as he performed that matchless obe-
“ dience, and underwent those unparalleled
“ sufferings, in your nature and professedly
“ in your stead ; I am thoroughly satisfied,
“ and you are completely justified. Now,
“ though I can never dispense with any fault,
“ or connive at any infirmity ; yet I behold
“ all your faults laid on Immanuel ; I be-
“ hold all his righteousness put upon you.
“ And on *his* account, I acquit you from
“ guilt ; I accept you as righteous ; and pro-
“ nounce you worthy of eternal life.—Hail !
“ ye highly favoured of the Lord ! Ye are
“ wise ; ye are safe ; ye are happy. My
“ Author and your God, has pronounced you
“ *blessed* ; and shall I seek to reverse it ? Your
“ Redeemer has *died*, your Redeemer is *risen* ;
“ and shall I dispute whether satisfaction was
“ made ? *How shall I curse, whom the Lord*
“ *hath not cursed ? Or how shall I defy, whom*
“ *the Lord hath not defied ?*”—Such is the
language of the divine law, to every believer

† Isa. xlii. 21.

in Jesus : with which justice acquiesces, while both agree to expedite and ascertain his eternal salvation ||.

What reason then, has the believer to *re-joice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*? To rejoice, not in himself, but in the LORD HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Joy in the Lord is his exalted privilege †, and thankfulness to God, should be his constant business. For, in the Redeemer's obedience, he is not only pardoned and freed from punishment ; but is also the object of divine complacency.— Though in himself, lothsome with impurity, and foul as the dunghill ; laden with guilt, and obnoxious to ruin ; yet, being interested in this most excellent righteousness, and vested with this most beautiful robe ; he is pronounced righteous by infinite justice, and declared absolutely fair, in the eye of Omniscience *.—While alive to the law, the righteousness in which he trusted, was but *filthy rags*. It could neither procure pardon for his sins, nor peace for his conscience ; neither adorn him for the glory of heaven, nor screen him from the vengeance of hell. But this—being wrought, finished, and infinitely ennobled, by our incarnate God—this, O believer ! is all in all. By this you have pardon of sin, and peace with your Maker ;

|| HERV. *Lett. to WESL.* p. 134, 135. † Philip. iv. 4.

* Numb. xxiii. 21. Jer. l. 20. Cant. iv. 7. Eph. v. 27. Col. i. 22.

are delivered from death, and entitled to glory. By this you are made meet for the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and in it shall shine to all eternity.

And, lest any awakened sinner should complain; “ Though the righteousness be infinitely glorious, it is quite out of my reach,” be it observed: That the righteousness itself and all the blessings connected with it, are the gifts of *freest grace*. And they are all designed, not to *distinguish* merit, but to *enrich* the indigent and *relieve* the miserable.—Come then, trembling sinner; seeing your poverty and feeling your misery, you have an indisputable right to rely on the righteousness and expect the blessings. The divine declaration excludes *none*, no not the *vilest*, that are willing to come to Jesus †. The most enormous crimes and the greatest unworthiness, are no objection at all, on the part of the Saviour. Why then should they be a discouragement to you?—Remember, it is *grace* to which you must apply for relief; and grace, in the very nature of things, has no concern, but with the *unworthy*.—It is *salvation*, a *great* salvation, you want. And who are the proper objects of such a favour? The holy? the righteous? those who can help themselves? No: but the guilty; the miserable; the damnable. These—let the

† John vi. 37 Matt. xi. 28.

desponding hear and rejoice! and let the mouth of proud infidelity be for ever stopped—these are the proper objects of a *great*, a *gracious*, a *divine* salvation. On such, grace will be magnified. From such, Immanuel will have the glory which is due to his sacred and charming name, JESUS.—May the Lord the Spirit, whose office it is to lead into all truth, and to glorify Christ, direct my reader's enquiries, and satisfy his doubts! May he *die* to the law and all self-righteous hopes! Then shall the law be *dead* to him. And, being married to the heavenly Bridegroom; interested in his person, and endowed with his infinite riches; he shall *bring forth fruit unto God* †. His soul shall be peaceful, and his life useful. Here, he shall be attended with inviolable safety; hereafter, he shall enjoy unutterable bliss.

† Rom. vii. 4.

SECT.

S E C T. V.

Believers dead to the law, that they might live to God.

SOME, perhaps, may be ready to infer;
 “ That if believers are *dead* to the law,
 “ and the law be *dead* to them, then they
 “ are at full liberty to *live* as they please.
 “ They may sin without *control* from the
 “ law, and without any *remorse* of conscience.
 “ Their own obedience, being no *condition*
 “ of their pardon and justification; having
 “ no hand in *procuring* the favour of God,
 “ or the salvation of their souls; there is no
 “ occasion for it. They may launch out into
 “ licentiousness, and their *state* be equally
 “ safe, their *end* equally happy; as if they
 “ were diligent in the performance of duty,
 “ and strictly self-denying.”—In answer to
 such an ignorant cavil, and in confutation of
 such a false surmise, I shall only observe; That
 the great apostle has drawn a very *different*
 conclusion from the *same* premises. For he
 says, *I am dead to the law, that I might—*
 what? commit iniquity with greediness, and
 sin with impunity? By no means. But, *that*
I might LIVE UNTO GOD.

The glory of God is the ultimate end of
 our existence itself, and of all we enjoy. All
 the *dispensations* of his providence, and all

the *blessings* of his grace, perfectly harmonize in accomplishing the grand design. But the blessings of grace, being much more *glorious* in themselves, more *beneficial* to us, and truly *astonishing* in the manner of their communication ; are more fully adapted to answer that sacred purpose. In such a light the believer views them. As calculated to answer so high an end, he delights in them, and is thankful for them.—And as living to God is his *duty* , so he esteems it his *privilege* , and desires to make it his constant *business* .

The persons, of whom we speak, are said to *live* . They live, not only an animal and a rational, but also a *spiritual* life. This life they received from Christ. As it is written ; *The hour is coming and now is, when the dead in sin shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live †.* And as they received their life *from* him, so it is maintained *by* him. Its continuance, together with its vigour and exercise, depend on their union with him, and the communications of grace from him *.—They live *by faith* . For thus saith the Lord ; *The just, the truly righteous, shall live ; shall enjoy all their comfort and perform all their obedience, by faith ††.* And that we might not be at a loss to determine what faith it is by which they live, the apostle informs us when he says ; *I live by the*

† John v. 25.

* John xiv. 19.

†† Rom. i. 17.

that they might live to God.

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faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me †. I live by the faith of Him, whose love to me was great and unparalleled, and absolutely inexpressible in any other way than by its amazing effects, in giving himself up, as a surety for me, to the stroke of justice and the death of the cross. It is from Him, as my glorious Substitute, I derive my peace: it is on Him, as absolutely complete, I depend for my all.

Again: They live—not to *themselves*, in the gratification of their sinful appetites; not to the *world*, in conforming to its corrupt customs and seeking their happiness in it—but to *God*. As they live a life of *faith* on the adored Redeemer, which affords peace to their souls; so they live a life of *obedience* to their heavenly Father, which brings glory to his eternal name. This obedience includes, a real *love* to him, and a conscientious conformity to his commands.—It includes a real *love* to him. The christian loves God, as he is in himself, an infinitely *amiable* Being; and as he is to him, an infinitely *gracious* and *beneficent* Being. He who does not *love* the Lord, certainly cannot *live* to him. For we can never be said, with propriety, to live to any particular person, or *for* any particular end; unless our affections be set on the person, and the bent of our desires be to attain the

† Gal. ii. 20.

end.

end.—But, as the sinner who is *dead* to the law, as the believer who is *married* to Jesus; beholds the glory of God in the person and work of the Saviour; so he cannot but love him with a supreme affection. The attributes of Deity shining through that wonderful medium, and the veil of ignorance and unbelief being removed; he bows before the infinite Majesty, and reveres his transcendent perfections, as thus displayed. In the great Immanuel they all appear, awfully glorious, yet supremely amiable.—On the cross, as an amazing theatre, he beholds, *mercy and truth meeting together; righteousness and peace kissing each other.* There he beholds, *veracity* executing her severest threatenings, with an impartial hand; and *love* performing her choicest promises, with the greatest alacrity. *Justice* asserting her rights, and *mercy* dispensing her pardons. Tremendous *wrath* revealed, and sovereign *grace* exalted. It is here he learns the divine character; THE JUST GOD AND THE SAVIOUR.

Beholding the condescension and love of the suffering Surety, and his amazing transactions on the cross; he at once *admires* his person and *confides* in his work. He admires his *person*, as altogether lovely. He confides in his *work*, as absolutely complete. In Jesus he beholds the glory of the true God. This glory attracts his adoring regards, and commands his sincerest love. The more he sees
of

of his God, and the more he loves him. And it is his greatest concern, that he does not love him with a more *intense* and *steady* affection. The burden of his soul frequently is, that he should be guilty of such *ingratitude* to that sublime and beneficent Being, whose infinite excellencies deserve all possible love. Whose boundless grace and immense liberality to an unworthy object, lay him under additional and eternal obligations to make a complete and everlasting surrender of his heart to him. The love of God being shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, he loves and adores his Maker. And the imperfections attending his warmest affection to his Father and his God, become the matter of his daily sorrow and penitential acknowledgment at the throne of grace. Now he sees the propriety of the apostolic maxim; *We love him because he first loved us.* This divine flame being kindled in his breast, he begins to live to his God. The language of his heart is; *What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?*

That glorious grace, which has laid so firm a foundation in the death of Christ for the peace of his conscience, and formed in his heart the noblest principle for producing a willing and acceptable obedience; teaches and enables him to yield a conscientious conformity to the *divine commands*.—Being bought with a price, he now considers himself as the Lord's. The powers of his mind, and the

members of his body ; the *talents* with which he is endowed, and the *time* with which he is indulged ; all that he *is* and all that he *has* ; he freely acknowledges to belong to his God. As possessed of the powers of *reason*, and surrounded with the blessings of *providence*, he discerns his obligations to his bountiful Creator and kind Preserver, in a much stronger light than before he was wont to do. His rational faculties, which he before debased to subserve inglorious designs in the service of satan, he now desires to devote to his Maker. The favours of providence he once abused to the gratification of abominable lusts, and prostituted to the vilest purposes ; he now endeavours to improve to the honour of their liberal Donor.—Being conscious, that he is *less than the least of all the divine mercies*, that it is free favour from whence they all proceed, and that he is accountable to God for the use or abuse of them ; he is careful to husband them well, and to perform the part of a faithful steward in the use of his temporal enjoyments, that in so doing he may obtain the approbation of his Lord. Now the *poor* among the people of God, whom he once over-looked and despised, have his compassionate regards and receive relief from his hand. This he does for the sake, and in the name of his Saviour : being well persuaded that he will consider it as done to him.

that they might live to God. 83

himself †.—The cause of Christ and the cause of religion in general, he is ready to support, according to his ability. Remembering that JESUS is the dearest of names, and his the best of causes; with cheerfulness he lends a helping hand, as providence calls and duty requires.—Being ennobled with that honour which comes from God, and an heir of eternal riches; he is not fond of worldly distinctions, nor anxious about transitory wealth. If he abounds in riches, he considers himself as only intrusted with them by the great Lord of all, for farther usefulness. If, by a reverse of fortune, he sink into poverty, he patiently bears it; knowing that he who gave the abundance, has a right to take it away whenever he pleases. Believing the promise, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*; he knows that all things shall work together for his good. The Almighty is become a guarantee for his safety, and he *confides* in him. Jehovah is his portion, and he is *satisfied* with it.—Thus he *lives to God*, in the enjoyment and use of *providential favours*, in proportion as faith and love are in exercise.

Farther: He lives to God and enjoys communion with him, in the *appointments* of his house and the *ordinances* of divine worship. These sacred institutions, while alive to the

† Matt. xxv. 35, 36.

law and unregenerate, were attended by him as *dry* duties and *formal* services. To behold the glory of Christ, and to feast upon his fulness; to have the presence of God, and rejoice in the light of his countenance; these were things he neither expected nor could desire. But now, nothing short of this will satisfy his soul. He will leave the house of God and the exercises of the closet with a heavy heart and go mourning away, if he has not beheld his Beloved and had some degree of nearness to him *.—The gospel is a joyful sound in his ears, and a reviving cordial to his drooping spirits. On the unadulterated milk of the word he feeds with delight, and his very soul is refreshed by it †.

Yet too often, alas, when engaged in divine worship, he finds that his thoughts wander, and his pious affections are dull: the corruptions of his heart work, and satan attacks him with horrid suggestions: all which interrupt his communion with God, and fill his soul with grief.—He is fully convinced, by repeated experience, that the best of his duties are defiled with sin, and utterly unworthy of divine acceptance. Yea, such is the sense which he has of their shameful defects, that sometimes he is tempted to think, they are more likely to *provoke* the abhorrence, than *gain* the approbation of Je-

* Psalms lxiii. 1, 2. and lxxxiv. 1, 2. Cant. v. 6.

† 1 Pet. ii. 2.

hovah. Yet he does not, he cannot entirely omit them, even in those gloomy moments.— In such unhappy seasons he is too apt to forget, that his *services*, as well as his *person*, are accepted only *in the Beloved*. As our persons are abominably sinful, and our services extremely imperfect; so if *those* be not cleansed by atoning blood, and *these* presented by the hand of the great Intercessor, there can be no acceptance for the one or the other. But if our *persons* be washed, in that sacred fountain which was opened for sin and uncleanness; if our *duties* be presented by the hand of our exalted High-priest, and perfumed with the incense of his mediation*; then the acceptance of both is certain. So that our acceptance with God in every view, both as to persons and services, is only in Christ, and for the sake of his work. It is *in* him as our head, and for the sake of that work which he finished on the cross, that our sins are pardoned and our persons accepted. It is *in* him, and in virtue of his intercession, that our most righteous performances meet with the least approbation from an holy God. These are the ground of the believer's confidence, both as to the *safety* of his state, and the *acceptance* of his duties.

The christian, having an abiding and feeling sense that such are his imperfections, frequently

* Rev. viii. 3, 4.

confesses them at the throne of grace, and on their account is deeply humbled. But, though humbled in the dust for them, he does not despair. For, being dead to the law, he is enabled to look to Jesus his heavenly bridegroom. And having a fresh application of atoning blood to his conscience, he is delivered from slavish fear and strengthened for future duty. As a *guilty sinner* he comes again and again, to the sacred, sanctifying stream, which flowed from the wounds of a crucified Saviour; and in this way he maintains peace in his mind. As insufficient to perform any duty, to subdue any corruption, or resist any temptation; he earnestly seeks the aids of the Spirit. Thus the blood of the cross and the spirit of Christ, enable him to live—*near* to God, as completely justified—to the *honour* of God, as partly sanctified.

Nor is the believer satisfied with paying a due regard to the *public* appointments of religion, and living to God in attending upon them. His desire is, to cultivate a correspondence with his heavenly Father, in the *family* and in the *closet*; at all times and in all places.—Conscious that he is ever under the eye of Omniscience, and always in the presence of Him who searches the heart; he pays a particular regard to the *inward frame* of his mind; nor does he observe, without grief, the *most secret* workings of inbred corruption.

ruption. For he knows, that the least deviation from the holy law, is a sin: that the least sin, is abhorred by Infinite Purity, and absolutely inexpressible by any atonement, but that which was made by the great Messiah. His habitual desire therefore is, to avoid sin, as the greatest of evils; and to follow after holiness, as the most desirable thing.—He does not think it sufficient to be free from scandalous vices, or to abstain from such things as would injure his religious character among his fellow-professors; his elevated aim is, so to live to God and so to walk with him here, as shall bear the *nearest resemblance* to the business and the bliss of the saints in light, that the present imperfect state will admit. That ineffable glory, the fruition of which he expects in the upper world, he desires, in some degree, to partake even here, by anticipation. Nor are these desires in vain. For, as he is dead to the law, and lives to God; as he believes in Jesus, and walks in the ways of holiness; he enjoys the *smiles* of Jehovah's countenance, and tastes the *sweets* of celestial joy. He possesses an infallible earnest, and has a delightful prelibation, of the expected happiness.

He remembers that his duration here is short, and the time of his exit extremely uncertain. This is a spur to diligence in the performance of duty, and an incentive to watchfulness against the insurrections of indwelling

sin, and the incursions of outward temptation.—Such being his situation, his habitual desire is, to perform the commandments of God with the greatest punctuality, and as under the divine inspection: to fill up every station in life, with the highest credit to his holy profession; and to render himself useful to all around him, by a heavenly conduct and a shining example, so long as he lives.—To be found *ready* when his Lord shall come; to be found *wakeful*, with his lamp trimmed and burning, when the Bridegroom calls; is a matter of infinite importance in his esteem.

Once more: As it is the desire of him who lives to God, thus to spend his time and thus to perform his duty; so his principal end in all is, *the glory* of God. This course of obedience and self-denial, is not intended to *gain* the divine favour, or *procure* the great inheritance; but for the *honour* of his infinite Benefactor.—Pardon of all sin, and complete reconciliation with our offended Maker; deliverance from the wrath to come, and a hope of future felicity; are not *procured* by such feeble endeavours, but *granted, freely granted*, by omnipotent grace. Of this the man who lives to God, is fully persuaded; therefore he has not the most distant thought of procuring them, by any thing which he can do. But *gratitude* to the dying Redeemer, and *love* to the blessed God, being the united

and

and powerful *principle* from which he acts; the glory of the supreme Cause, and the honour of the divine Mediator, constitute the exalted *end*. This is the highest end, of which we can conceive. The inhabitants of the heavenly world, in all their wonderful orders and in all their noblest services, can aim at nothing superior. Yet with such views, sublime as they are, *ought* the believer invariably to act; in performing every duty, in resisting every temptation, and in bearing every hardship, which may attend his progress in a course of sincere piety. And with such views he *will* act, in proportion as his mind is enlightened and faith is in exercise.

And now, reader, what is the tenour of *your* conduct? To what, or to whom do you *live*? Is it the immensely glorious God? or is it yourself and the world?—On what have you placed your affections? to whom have you devoted your heart? Remember who it is that makes the tender and righteous demand; *My son, give Me thy heart*. His infinite excellencies require it of you, as a *man*. And, if a *believer*, your obligations are unspeakably heightened. For, as such, you are an *object* of redeeming love, and a *subject* of regenerating grace. *You are not your own; you are bought with a price*.—If then you profess yourself a christian, consider the purport of that profession. By laying claim to the honourable character, you profess to *live to God*.
How

How glorious the character! How noble the profession! Disgrace not that holy name, by which you are called. Dishonour not that life, you profess to lead. Lest you pierce yourself through with many sorrows, and cause the enemies of the cross to triumph.

Awful it is to think, how many there are who *bear* the christian character and *profess* to believe the gospel, who yet are far from living to God. The world has their hearts. It engrosses their warmest affections. The language of their conduct is; “Who will shew us any *temporal* Good?” Or, “Where shall we find any *carnal* pleasure?”—Such would do well to remember, that to *mind earthly things*; to be *lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God*; are the characters of the profane, in the sacred writings*. Such, whoever they be, are the enemies of God; and, in the most emphatical sense, the enemies of the cross of Christ†. The state of such is extremely dangerous; and, if grace prevent not, eternal destruction will be their portion.—Reader! is this *your* case? If so, you ought either to reform your conduct, or renounce every pretence to christianity. You cannot obey God and mammon. You cannot serve Christ and the world. They are opposite masters and have opposite interests. If you profess to be *dead*

* Philip. iii. 19. 2 Tim. iii. 4.

† Jam. iv. 4.

Philip. iii. 18.

to the law, as a covenant; you *must live to* God, or you contradict yourself and blaspheme the gospel.—Do not imagine that your state is safe, because you have adopted an *orthodox* system of sentiments, and have a clear and consistent view of the capital doctrines of divine revelation. Such sentiments you may embrace; such a consistent view of divine truths you may have: and yet remain a hardened rebel against your Maker, and be a scandal to the dear Redeemer's cause. You may be wise in theory and right in your doctrinal principles, while your soul is in jeopardy, and the tenour of your conduct fatally wrong. For it is a certain truth, that our religious knowledge will be of no farther use to ourselves, than as it elevates our affections to heavenly things, meliorates our tempers, and rectifies our conduct. You may attend on a preached gospel, be a member of the purest visible church, and have a seat at the Lord's table; yet after all, die unregenerate and be eternally lost.—Think then, O carnal professor! what a shocking figure you will make, among the many millions of the damned, if, at last, you should perish. The case of impenitent *Jews* or idolatrous *Heathens*, who go to that place of torment, will not be so awful as yours. To think of one who had often heard the gospel, who professed to believe its sublime and glorious doctrines, and had frequently partook of the memorials

morials of the body and blood of Christ; to think of such an one, not living to God but in allowed iniquity and dying in unbelief, is awful indeed! For the glorious gospel he so often heard, will be to him *the savour of death unto death*; and the superior knowledge, of which he might boast, will give a *dreadful emphasis* to his torment, and aggravate his eternal ruin. It is greatly to be feared that, in the end, many such will be found; and take heed, reader! that you be not one of them.

Again: Do you profess, not only to be dead to the law and to believe the gospel, but also to *live to God*? If so, what is the *principle* of your obedience, and what is the *end* for which you perform it? Is *self-love* the principle, and *self-preservation* the end? or, the *love* of God, and the *glory* of his eternal name? If the *former*, you are yet alive to the law: if the *latter*, it is the obedience which God accepts. Love to Him, whose perfections are infinite; love to Him, whose grace is unbounded; is the fruitful and delightful source of every good work.—But, as we love the Lord only in proportion as we know him, let it be your constant concern to increase in your acquaintance with him. To that end, study the cross of Christ. For there the glories of the Godhead shine; there they are displayed in the clearest manner, and appear with a winning aspect. These glories

glories beheld, in the face of Jesus Christ, will have a *transforming* influence. You will *love* your God ; you will desire to be *like* him. This will make duty easy. - This will make the way of holiness delightful. You will hate sin, not only as *condemning*, but also as *filthy* and abominable.—Then, out of gratitude to the bleeding Jesus, and with a view to the glory of the Lord Jehovah, you will desire to obey every divine precept. Then you will not only *talk* about living to God, as being a duty ; but you will *exemplify* it in your own conduct. You will make it appear that you *love* Him, and that it is your main business to *glorify* Him. And except you evidence this, in some degree, all your pretensions to vital religion and primitive christianity, are vain.

S E C T.

S E C T. VI.

That we must be dead to the law, as a covenant, before we can live to God, in holy and acceptable obedience.

HAVING already observed, that the great end designed by our being dead to the law, is, *that we might live unto God*: we now proceed to shew; That it is *impossible* for such, who are alive to the law, as a covenant, to live unto God in holy and acceptable obedience. Or, in other words, That while a man is looking to his own righteousness, as the *condition* of his justification, he can perform no works, that are truly *good*; no obedience, that is *acceptable* to God.—This position may appear *strange*, and perhaps be despised by many, as *highly absurd*. Notwithstanding I am fully persuaded, that it will be found, on impartial enquiry, to contain an important truth. And in proof of it, the following things are offered to consideration.

Let us once more advert to those emphatical words, which have furnished matter for the preceding *sections*. For in them the truth we would now illustrate and confirm, is very plainly and strongly implied.—Thus they read; *For I through the law, am dead to the law, THAT I MIGHT live unto God*. When an unerring writer asserts, *I am dead to the law,*

law, that I might *live unto God*; does he not signify, beyond all reasonable doubt, that while he was alive to the law, he *could not* live to God? If the phrase here used has any sense, or be used with any propriety, it must suggest that idea. If he *might* have lived to God, while he sought righteousness and life by the law, and before he was dead to it; what tolerable reason can be given for his thus speaking? And that the apostle had as good *opportunities*, and as great a *zeal* so to have done, as any other man, if such a thing had been practicable, will not be disputed. This, therefore, I humbly conceive, is no contemptible proof of the point.

The same infallible author, in another part of his invaluable writings, says; *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, —that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, THAT WE SHOULD BRING FORTH FRUIT UNTO GOD* †. Here we are taught, that we must be *dead* to the law, before we can be *married* to Christ: and that we must be married to him, before we *can* bring forth fruit unto God.—The glorious end designed and the happy effect produced, by the believer's conjugal relation to Jesus, are, *that he should bring forth fruit unto God*. That relation, therefore, must be *prior* to this effect. And

† Rom. vii. 4.

it is quite evident from the text, that our being *dead* to the law, is *previous* to the commencement of that high and honourable relation *.—And as children are called *the fruit of the womb* †, so the apostle intimates, that those works which are acceptable to God, and which follow upon this relation taking place between Christ and the sinner; may be compared to a *legitimate* offspring. Consequently, the best works performed by us, before we are dead to the law and married to Jesus, can be accounted no other than *spurious*; and therefore rejected of God.

In the same instructive paragraph it is said; *Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held*; that we should serve in *newness of spirit*, and not in the *oldness of the letter* ‡. From the plain import of these words it appears; That the law must be *dead* to us, before we can be *delivered* from it. And that we must be delivered from it, before we can serve God in *newness of spirit*; acting from a new principle, and with new views, having a new, right spirit formed in us. But this is not the case of any who are alive to the law. They who are *delivered* from the law; they to whom the law is *dead*, and they only, are the happy persons.

* It is of the believer's *open espousals* to Christ, that the apostle here treats.

† Psal. cxxvii. 3.

‡ Rom. vii. 6.

That no man who is alive to the law can live to God, will appear, if we consider, that the *state* in which he lies, is a state of condemnation. For while alive to the law, he is under it as a covenant; and, as a breaker of it, is obnoxious to its condemning power. Being *of the works of the law*; seeking justification by his own obedience in conformity to it, he is *under the curse* ||. His *person* is accursed, and his *state* is damnable, according to the tenour of that law to which he looks for life. This is plain from the scripture.— If, then, his *person* be accursed, his *works* cannot be accepted. If his *state*, in the eye of the law, be that of a condemned rebel; his *conduct* cannot be supposed well-pleasing, in the eye of the great Lawgiver. His *state* must be good and his *person* accepted, before he can live to God, or glorify him in holy obedience.

Farther: No man can live to God, no man can perform acceptable obedience, while alive to the law, because he has no *vital union* with Christ. While alive to the law, we are in unbelief. While in unbelief, we are in our natural state. And while in our natural state, we are enemies to God and children of wrath §; consequently, have no *vital union*

|| Gal. iii. 10. § Rom. viii. 7. Col. i. 21. Eph. ii. 3. John iii. 36.

with Christ*.—And that none who are destitute of union with him, can do any good works, is clear from his own words. *Without me*; without union with me, similar to that of the branch to the vine, *ye can do nothing*†. Ye can neither resist temptation successfully, nor perform duty acceptably. Ye can bear no fruit to the glory of God.—Here our Lord informs us, that the human heart is never influenced by *holy tempers*; that the human life cannot be productive of *good works*, till a man be united to Christ; any more than a branch can bear valuable fruit, while in a state of separation from the vine. And that so long as persons continue in a state of alienation from Jesus, they, with all their performances, are like a broken, withered branch: fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire and consumed from the earth.—Before we have a living union with the great Head of the church, we are not favoured with the *aids* of divine grace, nor *partakers* of the Holy Spirit. And, as it is the province of that sacred Agent, to enlighten the dark understanding

* That the chosen of God have union with Christ, *prior* to their regeneration, is readily granted. But then, I humbly conceive, whatever other epithets we may give that union, it cannot, with propriety, be called *vital*, till life be communicated to the dead sinner; which is done in regeneration. Then it is, and not till then, that we become *living branches* in the true vine. Vid. WITSII *Animad. Iren.* cap. 6. § 1, 2, 3.

† John xv. 5.

and

and lead into all truth ; so it is only by his assistance we can perform that which is good, or have the least desire so to do. According to that saying ; *For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure †.*

Again : *Without faith it is impossible to please God ||.* The faith designed, is *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* It is that by which the *just live*, and to which a divine righteousness is revealed in the gospel §. It has the Son of God for its object, and salvation for its end *. But all who are alive to the law, are destitute of it.—This appears from hence : They who believe on Jesus, believe on him as the *justifier of the ungodly †.* They who are alive to the law, have no such dependance. It is directly contrary to their views and their inclinations. They are seeking to establish their own righteousness, and look for acceptance with God in that way. They overlook that provision which grace has made, for the *entirely* unworthy ; and despise that righteousness which the Mediator wrought out, for the justification of the *ungodly.* Therefore, being destitute of that faith which *purifies* the heart and *works* by love ; being unbelievers, whose *mind and conscience are defiled*, and to

† Philip. ii. 13. || Heb. xi. 6. § Heb. x. 38.
Rom. i. 17. * Gal. ii. 20. † 1 Pet. i. 9. † Rom.
iv. 5.

whom *nothing is pure* ||; nothing they have, nothing they do, is acceptable to God. Consequently, they cannot live to him, or glorify his name.

Once more: The *love* of God being the principle, and the *glory* of God the end, of all acceptable obedience; the man who does not act from *that* delightful principle, and with a view to *this* exalted end, cannot be said to live unto God. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*—But whoever is alive to the law, acts from a different principle, and aims at a different end. Such a person may act from *self-love*, or *pharisaical* pride; but he cannot act from love to his Maker, and with a view to his glory. As ignorant of God, he *cannot* love him. As in his natural state, his carnal mind is *enmity* against him. Cleaving to the law for life, and depending on his own righteousness; he *rebels* against the gospel, and *slights* the gracious Redeemer.—Does he abstain from an *outward course* of sin? It is not because he *loves* holiness, or from a sense of the contrariety there is in sin to the perfections of the Deity, that he forbears to gratify his vicious appetites to the full extent of his power; but because he is apprehensive that *disagreeable consequences* would follow upon such a conduct.—Does he attend *religious*

ordinances ? It is not from love to their great *Institutor*, or because he delights in them as *means* of communion with God ; but because he loves himself, and hopes, by observing the divine commands, to obtain favour at the great tribunal. Would his *conscience* be easy and his *hope* of heaven continue, without these devotional services ; he would drop them without hesitation, and leave their performance to others. A *slavish* fear of hell, and a *mercenary* expectation of heaven ; *self-love*, and *self-preservation* ; are the main springs of his moral and religious conduct, and the end which he has in view.—In certain situations and connections in life, a regard to the *decency* and *present usefulness* of a moral conversation, and an esteem for a religious character, may bridle the baser passions, and also excite to take up and maintain a religious profession. But, whether we avoid sin and practise duty, with a view to *obtain* the favour of heaven and *escape* everlasting misery ; or whether it be with a design to gain the *advantages* of a moral behaviour and the *reputation* of appearing religious ; it is certain that we are very far from *living to God*. A *real love* to him, and a *supreme concern* for his glory, though essential to acceptable obedience, are things with which we are not acquainted.—Hence we may safely conclude, that it is absolutely necessary, a man should be *dead to the law* ; should drop all expecta-

tions of justification by his own obedience ; before he can *live to God*, in the performance of duty and the practice of real virtue.

Hence we may learn, what numbers there are, who, with a blind zeal and self-righteous views, strongly assert the *necessity* of human obedience, in order to acceptance with God, who are not able to perform any good works. They, indeed, fondly imagine themselves to be the *greatest friends* to the interests of holiness, because they are closely attached to the law, as a covenant. And as they loudly plead the necessity of living to God ; so they greatly please themselves with a fancied obedience to his sacred precepts : while the doctrine of *sovereign* grace ; the declarations of a *free* Saviour and a *finished* salvation, without their doings or deservings ; are held in detestation by them.—And why ? Because they suppose that such doctrines received, must make *void* the obligations of the law in every sense, and *sap* the foundations of all morality. Thus they gratify their native pride, under the fair pretext of a superior regard to the law, and a flaming zeal for holiness.—But, if the arguments already adduced be founded in truth, the vanity of such a pretence is evident. For hence it appears, that the doctrine of grace is so far from being licentious, that without an experimental acquaintance with it, we can do *no* good work, nor *at all* live to God. Till possessed of such an acquaintance

quaintance with it, we have no *faith* in Jesus ; no *love* to our Maker ; no *desire* to live to his glory. It is the gospel, in the hand of the Spirit, by which faith is implanted and love produced in the heart. These plants of heavenly origin, grow, and flourish, and bring forth fruit, under its benign influences. It is the honoured instrument, in Jehovah's hand, for enlightening the ignorant and reforming the profligate. An experience of its power makes the ways of holiness pleasant, and the practice of duty delightful.—Yes, reader, the more you *know* of the glorious gospel, the more will you *love* its heavenly Author. So shall you find, by increasing and happy experience, that as nothing in the world can be compared with it, for affording relief to a *distressed conscience* ; so there is nothing equal to it, for establishing duty on a *solid basis*—enforcing it by *cogent motives*—and directing it to a *worthy end*.

How glorious is your state, believer ! Your person being accepted of God, your works are pleasing to him. And a remembrance that *your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, is a noble encouragement to abound and continue in well-doing. Your works of faith and labours of love, being fruits of a vital union with Jesus, and evidences of a grateful heart, are highly pleasing to your heavenly Father. Surely then, it should be your fervent desire and constant care, as a

living branch in the true vine, to bear the most generous fruit in rich abundance.—O, believer ! it is your happiness to have every *sin* pardoned, and every *curse* removed ; to *believe* in the Son of God, and to *enjoy* communion with him. Yours it is, to *love* the Lord, and *seek* his glory ; to perform duty by *divine* assistance, and to have your pious services and spiritual sacrifices *presented* by your great High-Priest. Yours is the high prerogative of *living to God*. Prize the privilege : walk worthy of your exalted station and heavenly calling.

As there are, comparatively, very few, who are capable of living to God ; if you, reader, profess to be one of those few, your obligations to obedience are many and unspeakably great. And you will do well to remember, that to *talk* of being possessed of superior advantages for the practice of virtue, and at the same time *live* as do the world in common, is a great inconsistency. To pretend that you believe in Jesus, are in a justified state, and have delightful communion with the best of Beings—that you have a clear knowledge of divine truth, and a high esteem for the ordinances of Christ, in their primitive purity—to pretend to these very superior advantages, while the only discernible difference between you and the world consists, in your entertaining a different *set* of sentiments, or having different *forms* of external

external worship, is monstrous and shocking. If this be your case, your speculative knowledge of evangelical truth, is sadly abused. It is converted into fuel for your spiritual pride. While your conduct is a standing reproach to the name which you bear, and a foul disgrace to the truths which you hold. In proportion as our light is clearer, and our advantages greater; our example should be brighter, and our lives more useful.

S E C T. VII.

Of the law, as a rule of conduct to believers.

WE have already observed, that the moral law may be considered, either as the formula of the *covenant of works*, or as a *rule of conduct*. Under the *former* consideration we have shewn, that believers are *dead* to it, and *delivered* from it; that it has no *demands* upon them, nor any *dominion* over them. It now remains that we consider it under its *latter* denomination. And here we shall endeavour to prove, that as a *rule of conduct*, it deserves and requires the sincere and uninterrupted regards of all who believe.

That the law may be considered as the *rule* of our obedience in general, even when it ceases to have any claims upon us, or any threatenings against us, as a *covenant*; is an important truth, and easy to be apprehended.

Some

Some persons, indeed, either cannot or will not see the moral law in any other light, than that of a covenant. And imagine, that if we lose the idea of the *reward* it promises to perfect obedience, and of the *curse* it denounces against transgression, we lose the idea of the *law* itself. Consequently they must maintain, that when a person is delivered from it, as a *covenant*, he has no longer any concern with it, under any consideration. But this is a great mistake, and pregnant with dangerous consequences.

In order to set this matter in a clearer light, it may be of use to observe: That the idea of the law, as a *rule*, is prior, in the order of nature, to our conceptions of the law, as a *covenant*. For, man being formed a reasonable creature, and a subject of moral government; being designed to propagate his species, and fitted for social life; it was necessary that he should have a rule for his conduct, and have the bounds of his duty prescribed. That he should have such a rule as included, both his duty to God and his duty to his fellow-creatures.—When we consider mankind as a race of rational beings, their relation to the great Creator, and their relation one to another, seem necessarily to require it. Such a rule we have in the *moral law*. And the nature of things required, that some such rule, for the substance of it, should have been given to our first parents in
paradise;

paradise; even supposing the eternal Sovereign had not been pleased to connect a promise of life, with a conformity to it. As creatures in a state of probation, and as accountable to God for the use of their time and the exercise of their powers, it could not be otherwise.—To deny this, is to suppose, that Jehovah might have created a number of rational beings, in strict connection one with another, and all in a state of continual dependence upon himself; and at the same time, that it would have been consistent with all his perfections, to have had *no regard* to their conduct, whatever it might be, either towards himself or one to another: which would have excluded providence out of the world.

But though it was *necessary* that our great progenitor, while in a state of innocence, should have a prescription of duty, or a rule for his conduct; there *was* not, there *could* not be, any necessity arising from that relation in which he stood towards God, that this rule of his behaviour should have such additional circumstances, as gave it the form of a *covenant*.—Yet this was actually the case. His bountiful Creator, not only informed him of his duty, and threatened punishment against disobedience; but in the threatening itself, it was strongly implied, that his persevering obedience should be *rewarded* with life, and a happy immortality.

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The language of that law which he was under, is; *The man who doeth these things, who performs a perfect righteousness, shall live in them.* So our Lord, referring to the same law, says; *This do, and thou shalt live.*--This promise, made to obedience, gives the law the nature and form of a *covenant*. This constitution, therefore, was an act of divine condescension and divine sovereignty. Infinite justice made it *necessary*, that an offence against the Majesty of heaven should be *punished*; but the most perfect obedience of a creature, absolutely and perpetually dependent upon the Creator, gives *no claim* to any reward. If *Adam* had done all that was commanded, he must at last, Jesus himself being judge, have been but an *unprofitable servant*. Not the least pittance of merit could have arisen from it.—There is, therefore, a conceivable, a real, an important difference, between the law, as a *covenant*, and the same law as a *rule*. And, as in the order of nature, and in the necessary connections and dependencies of things, the idea of it as a rule, is *prior* to that of a covenant; so there is not the least absurdity in supposing, that it may *entirely cease* to the believer, in respect to the perfect, personal obedience it requires, as the condition of life, and the curse it annexes to every sin; while it continues in *full force*, as the rule of his actions.

That

That the moral law is a rule of conduct to believers, may be proved by various arguments. Some few of the many which might be produced, I shall now offer to the reader's consideration.—*Paul*, we find, even in that very chapter where he treats the most largely and explicitly, concerning believers being *dead* to the law, and the law being *dead* to them; asserts with respect to himself, *I delight in the law of God, after the inward man* §.—Now, whatever *law* that is which he here designs, he informs us that he delighted in it *after the inward man*. By the inward man, is not meant the *soul*, in contradistinction to the *body*; but the mind, considered as *renewed*, in opposition to the *corruption* of nature, still inherent.—This law, therefore, cannot be that which is *ceremonial*; for that was abrogated by the death of Christ. Nor can it be the law of *sin*; for that was his greatest burden, as appears from the context. Nor can it be the law of his *mind*; or that new and holy disposition, which was implanted in his heart in regeneration; for then the sense would be; “I delight in the new disposition of my mind, after my renewed mind.” Nor can it be the moral law, as a *covenant*; for to it he declares, he was *dead*.—It remains then, that it must be the moral law, as *the rule* of his obedience to

§ Rom. vii. 22.

God.

God. In the law, thus considered, he greatly delighted. He saw that it was *holy*, and *just*, and *good*. That *fervent* love which he had to his God; that *sincere* affection which he had to his neighbour; caused him to esteem it highly, and to observe it with diligence. And whoever is possessed of that holy and heavenly principle, cannot but love that law which requires the constant exercise of it †.

In another part of the same epistle, he evidently exhorts his believing correspondents to the practice of duty, by setting before them the precepts and prohibitions of the moral law. These are his words: *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness: Thou shalt not covet: And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law* *.—Now to what purpose does this infallible teacher make use of these precepts and prohibitions, and that in the very language of the decalogue, when exhorting believers to good works, if they have *nothing to do* with the law? Where is the *propriety*, where is the *reason*

† See also *verse 25*. So then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God.

* Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10.

of his so doing, on supposition that it is *not* the rule of their conduct?—For no one, acquainted with the gospel, can imagine that he is here urging the law upon them as a *covenant of works*. And there is no other light in which to consider it, if it is denied to be a rule of life.—I conclude therefore, that the inspired author has here taught us, in a very emphatical manner, that the law is a rule of conduct to believers.

The same experienced faint and incomparable man, when writing to the church at *Ephesus*, says; *Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*. This exhortation he enforces, by adding; *Honour thy father and mother* (*which* are the words of the law, and *the first commandment with promise* †.)—Now is it not *strange*, *exceeding strange*, that the apostle should thus refer to the law and expressly mention its precepts, when exhorting the people of God to perform their respective duties; and that he should do it, not only *once* but *repeatedly*, and to different churches ‡; if he did not consider it as the rule of their conduct? If the moral law had been entirely abrogated; if believers had been freed from all concern with it; he must have known it. And if he did know it, methinks it is absolutely unaccountable that he should, in this manner, make use of it and urge its

† Eph. vi. 1, 2.

‡ See also, Gal. v. 13, 14.

sacred injunctions, when writing to a church of Christ called out from among the *Gentiles*.

—What! was the Lord's ambassador so much at a loss for motives and arguments to enforce his divine Master's commands, even on the minds of those who were in professed subjection to him, that he must, in order to gain his point, make use of an *antiquated* law? a law with which they had *no* concern? That was far from him. The thought be far from us.

—That first-rate minister, in the Messiah's kingdom, was well persuaded, that the holy law was a rule for the conduct of christians. The glorious Surety having paid it the highest respect, in performing that perfect obedience which it required, and in suffering the dreadful penalty it threatened, as a covenant; he knew that it deserved the most sincere and uninterrupted regard, from all who profess to believe in Jesus, in their whole conversation. Without supposing this, I must freely confess, that I can discern neither sense nor propriety in his thus making use of it, when addressing believers.

We have a testimony to the truth for which we plead, from the pen of another apostle: which, as it appears pertinent to our purpose, may be briefly considered.—*James*, in perfect agreement with his brother *Paul*, says; *If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,*
ye

ye do well ||.—That it is the *moral* law, of which he speaks, cannot admit of a doubt. For he expressly mentions one of its principal commands. Now says he, *If ye believers, fulfil the royal law* of love one to another, without any difference of rich and poor, of high and low; *according to the scripture*, in which it is written, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well*. Ye act agreeably to the will of your heavenly Father, and the commandment of your Lord, who is king in Zion. Acts of christian kindness and brotherly love, to your fellow-creatures and fellow-christians, proceeding from love to God and with a view to his glory, are *good* works; such as the Lord himself will acknowledge to be *well done*.—Here we may farther observe, that in loving our neighbour, and in evidencing that love by a suitable series of action; we ought to have our eye upon that *authority* which enjoins it, and that *law* which requires it. It is the authority of God in his law, which we ought to regard.—I now proceed to confirm the truth, by other considerations.

If the moral law be *not* a rule of conduct to believers, either there is some *other*, and a new rule given in its stead, or there is *not*. If there be *another*, it may be presumed, that it is either more or less *perfect* than that con-

|| Jam. ii. 8.

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tained

tained in the moral law. But *more* perfect it cannot be, without supposing that the old, the eternal law, was *imperfect*: to suppose which, is blasphemously absurd.—If it be *less* perfect, the consequence is plain. It is not a complete system of duty. It admits of imperfections. It connives at sin. To imagine that infinite wisdom would contrive, and that infinite holiness would give, *such* a rule for the conduct of rational creatures; is absolutely inconsistent with the divine character, and pregnant with blasphemy. Such a rule therefore, condemns itself, and sinks with its own weight.—But if there be *not* another, then it follows by necessary consequence, that as there is *no rule* to regulate the conduct of believers, they can neither obey nor disobey. Sin and duty, as to them, are unmeaning names and empty sounds. For obedience presupposes a *command*. And it is equally evident, that *where there is no law, no rule of action, there can be no transgression.*

Again: I suppose it will not be denied, by any who acknowledge the Bible to contain a divine revelation, that the saints and people of God under the ancient *Jewish* æconomy, were bound to regard the moral law as the rule of their conduct. Yet it is evident, they were no more under it, as a *covenant*, nor any more obnoxious to its *curse*, than real christians under the gospel-dispensation. They who believed in the promised Messiah before
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he appeared, were pardoned and justified, were sanctified and saved; and all this by the same *rich grace*, and the same *all-sufficient Mediator*, with all who have known the Lord since the eternal Word became incarnate. The way of justification and salvation, having been but *one* and precisely the same, in all ages. — If, then, those *ancient* saints were bound to regard the law, as the rule of their moral behaviour; what sufficient reason can be given, why believers *now* should not be under the same obligation? Especially since our Lord has in the most solemn manner declared, that he *came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law*. To fulfil it, as a covenant, by his own consummate obedience, and by his most bitter sufferings in the stead of his people: and to enforce on their minds, by the most cogent motives, its heavenly precepts, as a perfect rule of duty. So that whether we consider the law as a rule of duty, or as a covenant of works; it is not made void by the coming of Christ, or the doctrine of grace: but, on the contrary, it is firmly *established*, and highly *magnified* §.

Farther: If believers be not under the *commanding* power of the law, supposing them to act ever so contrary to it, they are not chargeable with sinning against it, nor can they be denominated transgressors of it. — For in-

§ Rom. iii. 31. Isa. xlii. 21.

stance: The law says, *Thou shalt love God with a supreme and perfect affection. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* These are its capital commands: these are the sum of the law. But, if the law be *not* a rule of conduct to the christian; if he be not under its *commanding* power; he is no longer obliged by it to love either God or his neighbour. Consequently, on supposition that he love neither of them, he is not *guilty* in the eye of the law, or in the least a breaker of it. For where there is no legal *right* to command, there can be no *authority* to pronounce guilty. Therefore, if the believer be not under the commanding power of the law, whatever the dispositions of his heart, or the actions of his life may be; he is no transgressor of the law, it having no concern at all with him.—Such are the shocking absurdities, and such the abominable blasphemy, which follow a denial of the truth for which we contend.

Once more: We may argue from the *experience* of the christian and the *dictates* of his own conscience. When he reflects on the corruptions of his heart, the imperfections of his duties, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin; what is the standard by which he forms an estimate of these things? Some rule of duty he must have. Some rule he must, in his own conscience, acknowledge; or he can never judge of the dispositions of his heart and the actions of his life, so as to pronounce them

them either good or evil, perfect or defective; and be pained or pleased on the reflection. And what rule can this be, but the moral law? Is it not a complete one, and fit for the purpose? Is there any sin, which is not forbidden; is there any duty, which is not commanded, by that law which requires the constant exercise of perfect love to God, and perfect love to man? Can the believer ever *acquit* himself, in the court of his own conscience, when he is persuaded that his tempers or actions are contrary to it? Or does he ever *condemn* them as criminal, but on a supposition that there is something in them that is forbidden by it? Was it ever known that any christian should say, of his inclinations or actions; “ I pronounce these to be *evil*, “ though *required* by the moral law; and I “ declare those to be *good*, though *contrary* “ to it?”—We are assured, by an infallible pen, that *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. Nor is its usefulness, in this respect, confined to the time when a sinner is first awakened and converted. It is of use, in the hand of the Spirit, in all the future progress of the christian life. As the believer grows in grace, he sees more and more of its purity and spirituality, and is proportionably humbled, under a sense of his own depravity and imperfections. If, then, it be of use to a believer, still to convince of sin and still to humble for it; and if sin be no other than a

transgression of the law; it follows, that it must be the rule of his conduct.

Lastly: The law, considered as *moral*, is founded on the *nature* of things. The sublime *perfections* of Jehovah, and the *relation* he stands in to man, as being his Creator and Preserver; the *dependent* condition of man, and the *blessings* he receives from his Maker; constitute that *foundation* on which the law is built, as it respects our duty to God, in the exercise of perfect love, and the performance of holy worship. And as the law respects our duty to our neighbour, it is founded on that *mutual relation*, which we stand in one to another, in the present state of existence.—In proportion, therefore, to the *stability* of that foundation, on which the law is built; so is the law itself. If those *relations*, from whence all our obligations to God and one to another arise, be firm and unchangeable; such also must be the *obligations* themselves. The several relations and obligations, co-exist.—This being the case, it follows by necessary consequence; That while Jehovah is possessed of absolute *perfection*, and man a *dependent* being; while God is *God*, and man is *man*; that law which requires *perfect love* to our Maker, is immutable. And, so long as our relation one to another continues the same, it cannot but be the duty of every one, to *love his neighbour as he loves himself*. And as far as we come
short

short in either of these respects, so far we come short in the performance of our duty, and are chargeable with sin.—From what has been offered, in proof of the point, I humbly conceive we may safely conclude, that *the moral law is, and cannot but be, a rule of conduct to believers.*

It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that a complete conformity to this high and heavenly rule, is what the most holy and zealous believer cannot attain. A perfect, personal holiness, is not attainable by mortals. For, *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*—Notwithstanding, the law is no less the standard of duty; is no less the rule by which we ought to walk; than if we could observe it with the greatest punctuality. And every one, who pretends to faith in Jesus, ought to exert his best endeavours, and use his utmost diligence, that both his tempers and actions may correspond with it, as much as possible. This is his *bounden* duty: and this, if a real christian, will be his *sincere* desire.

For the true believer has no objection to it, nor any fears from it, thus considered. It is no longer a *fiery law*, thundering out anathemas, and flashing vengeance against him. No; it is mild and gentle.—He sees that its *precepts* are highly salutary, and its *prohibitions* exactly right. He would not wish to have them altered. *Love to God, and love*

to our neighbour, are a compendium of its precepts; and in the exercise of that love, he desires to abound. As to its *prohibitions*, he knows that the things forbidden would be an injury to him, were they pursued; therefore he esteems it his happiness to abstain from them.—That new disposition he received in his regeneration, inclines him to love God and delight in his law, as pure and holy. The gospel furnishes him with the strongest arguments and most winning motives, to abound in obedience; while it is his earnest prayer, that the Spirit of grace would afford effectual assistance, for the performance of it. And it is his greatest grief, that he does not more constantly and more perfectly transcribe the sacred precepts into his conduct, and cause them to shine in his own example.

Besides; the believer beholds the law—not in the hands of *Moses*, and as surrounded with the flames of *Sinai*—but in the hands of that prince of peace, who is king in Zion. He sees that the dear, the adorable, the ascended Jesus; having fulfilled its high demands, as a covenant, and released him from its awful curse; now makes use of it as an *instrument* of his benign government, for the good of the redeemed, and the glory of his own eternal name. As in the hand of Christ, it is a friend and a guide, pointing out the way in which the christian ought to walk, so as to express his gratitude to God for his benefits,

benefits, and glorify the Lord his Redeemer. And, at the same time, it shews him how *imperfect* his own obedience is; and so is a happy mean of keeping him humble at the foot of sovereign grace, and entirely dependent on the righteousness of his glorious Sponsor.

And now, to draw towards a close: What think you, reader, of the law, as *a rule of conduct*? Is it pleasant, is it delightful to you?—In vain you profess to know the glorious gospel, while you continue an enemy to the holy law. For as the law, in its covenant-form, is the appointed mean of convincing the careless sinner of his need of that righteousness which is revealed in the gospel, for the justification of his *person* before God; so the gospel, bringing adequate relief to the distressed conscience, is the happy instrument of conciliating the believer's regards to the law, as a rule of conduct, that his *faith* may be evidenced in the sight of men. Thus the law and the gospel are mutually subservient to each other; while both agree to promote the happiness of the redeemed, and the glory of their divine Author.—Therefore, he who does not pay an habitual regard to the law, in the way of *obedience*; has no experience of the gospel, in a way of *comfort*. And as he *tramples* on that divine authority, which shines in the former; so he *despises* that boundless grace, which is revealed in the latter.

latter. Such an one is an enemy to both, and his state is most deplorable.

Remember, reader, that you may *talk* as much as you please, about the holy tendency of evangelical principles; but the adversaries of the gospel will never believe you, if they do not see the truth of what you say, exemplified in your own conduct. The language of those observations they make on your conversation, is; “You who talk with such fluency and confidence about the doctrines of *grace*, and the necessity of *faith*; let us see what influence these doctrines have, on your own tempers and your own behaviour? Shew us your faith by your works?” —This is a reasonable demand. They are authorized to make it. And wo be to that professor of evangelical truth, who cannot, in some measure, satisfy it! For, if his conduct be not, in some degree, answerable to his profession, he will soon be treated as one of the greatest enemies to Christ and his cause.

Are you a *believer* in Jesus? one who *knows the grace of God in truth*? You have the purest and strongest motives imaginable, to cause you to regard the law. Has the SON of the HIGHEST done all that you were *bound* to perform, as the condition of life; and suffered all that you were *condemned* to sustain, as the penalty annexed to disobedience? Has He done and suffered all this in

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your *stead*, and on *purpose* that he might procure a full, final, and everlasting salvation for you, a poor damnable sinner? Has He expressed his regard to the law, as a covenant, not in words but in *deeds*; in *such* deeds as astonished the universe? and shall you be backward to manifest your love to the law, as a rule of duty, by a serious, holy, heavenly conduct? Did He, whom angels adore, obey, and bleed, and die; *die* the most accursed death, that the claims of the law might be all answered? and shall it seem *hard* to you, to deny yourself, to subdue your lusts, and walk by this heavenly rule? —Is it the general and popular clamour against the free and genuine gospel, “that it “makes *void* the law?” and shall it not be your constant business and fervent prayer, so to observe those sacred precepts, as to be a *standing confutation* of that vile slander? Do not reason and conscience, scripture and experience, all concur to shew the expediency, the utility, the necessity, of conforming your life to the law, as a rule? —O, believer! yours is the *happy* state; let yours be the *holy* life. Let it appear, that though dead to the law, as a covenant, you *abhor* the things it forbids, and *delight* in the things it commands. Then shall you stop the mouths of gainfayers; then shall you glorify the name of your God. *Amen.*

ERRATUM

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